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Beyond Acculturation: Towards a Non-Deficit View of International Students' Culture and
Support Networks

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Benjamin John Logan

2020

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Beyond Acculturation: Towards a Non-Deficit View of International Students' Culture and
Support Networks

by

Benjamin John Logan

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Patricia M. McDonough, Chair

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how Chinese and Indian international students in the United States utilize forms of capital and migrant networks to navigate their U.S. institution of higher education to achieve their educational goals. This study sought to answer its research questions by using a combination of in-person interviews with international students studying at a postsecondary institution in the U.S. as well as document analysis of websites of groups and organizations that offer support and guidance to international students. Findings from this study identified unique forms of mobility capital that were developed by international students prior to their arrival to the U.S., particularly through education activities designed to prepare future international students to study in a foreign country. Additionally, this study identified that international students drew upon support from a large transnational network that spans the globe during their postsecondary studies, but had limited interaction with migrant communities in the U.S. outside of those who are family or family friends.

The dissertation of Benjamin John Logan is approved.

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VITA

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the 21st Century, an increasing number of international students began matriculating to U.S. colleges and universities each year. In the 2014/15 academic year, the number of international students attending U.S. colleges and universities rose to 1,043,835, for the first time surpassing a million students (Institute of International Education, 2019a). This meteoric rise in attendance has been accompanied by an increased interest in understanding the needs of this unique student population so U.S. colleges and universities can better help international students achieve positive academic outcomes (Andrade, 2006; Lee, 2014).

While great strides have been made to understand the experiences of international students studying in foreign countries and how postsecondary education institutions can better serve this student population, previous research on international students studying in the United States often views international students' lives as being contained solely within the confines of their college campus (Gargano, 2009; King and & Raghuram, 2013). For example, research identifies how engagement with faculty, staff, and both U.S. students and other international students are predictors of persistence, GPA, and institutional satisfaction for international students (Aubrey, 1991; Bista, 2015; Lee, 2010; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Mori, 2000). This limited view of international students fails to account for A.) how their backgrounds may provide unique forms of capital that aid them in their studies, and B.) how their backgrounds influence whom they look to for support on and off campus. Previous research on international students studying in the U.S. fails to fully account for their experiences for two primary reasons: First, early quantitative research on international students has been built upon pre-existing longitudinal surveys that were created based on the needs of traditional U.S. college students, resulting in these studies not capturing the distinct backgrounds and experiences of international students

studying in the U.S. Second, previous quantitative and qualitative studies on international students that strive to account for their unique experiences have heavily focused on acculturation, taking a deficit approach that views being an international students as a hindrance to succeeding at a U.S. college or university which overlooks the possibility that international students may have unique forms of capital that can aid them during their studies (Gargano, 2009; King & Raghuram, 2013; Lee, 2010; Soong, 2016). This study sought to follow recent literature that has attempted to center student voices and understand how the backgrounds of international students can be an asset to them during their studies opposed to solely something which needs to be overcome (Gareis & Jalayer, 2018; Ma, 2018; Page & Chahboun, 2019).

Misapplication of Traditional College Student Models to International Students

Much of the previous research on international students has been built upon existing theoretical perspectives of college student development and academic success that were originally created for the purpose of understanding the needs of traditional college students (i.e., raised in the United States, entering college immediately after high school, etc.) (Bista, 2015; Foot, 2009; Grayson, 2008; Korobova, 2012; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Zhao, Kuh, Carini, 2005, Zhou & Cole, 2016). Such approaches inadequately account for the full international student experience by not considering the special circumstances of international students that filter how this student population understands and makes meaning of their time within U.S. institutions of higher education (Gargano, 2009; King & Raghuram, 2013). Research on international students using frameworks or surveys originally designed for traditional U.S. college students fail to capture the full experiences and needs of international students for two primary reasons: First, previous research on international students utilizing existing surveys designed to understand the needs of traditional U.S. college students fail to account for biographical characteristics of

international students that are not included in existing surveys. Most longitudinal surveys of college students in the U.S. do not collect data on student's country of citizenship, disaggregate race (e.g., Chinese or Korean vs. the more general Asian), or disaggregate ethnicity (e.g., Tibetan or Uyghur vs. the more general Chinese). For example, Zhou & Cole (2016) utilize pre-existing Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) surveys to compare international student satisfaction and experiences of discrimination with those experienced by U.S. students. While such research illuminates international students' experiences, surveys like those conducted by CIRP do not ask for students' country of citizenship or ethnicity, limiting conclusions from this research to being focused on only international students in general or overly broad racial categories (e.g., Asian, Black, White, etc.) that do not accurately capture the complexity of international students' backgrounds. The omission of international students' unique background characteristics prevents a large body of existing research from being able to adequately explain how different international student groups are able to build upon cultural or ethnic bonds to navigate higher education systems in the United States. Similarly, such approaches do not permit an understanding of how different ethnic backgrounds result in international students creating meaning of their time at a U.S. institution of higher education or how international students potentially look to the greater migrant community for assistance in being academically and socially successful in the United States

Second, much of the quantitative research on international students limits the nexus of these students' lives to events contained within their higher education institutions (e.g., engagement with the campus community, participation in student groups, etc.) or to experiences which can be directly linked to co-curricular activities (e.g., internships for credit) (Bista, 2015; Korobova, 2012; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Zhou, Kuh, & Carini, 2005; Zhou & Cole, 2016). For

example, Zhou, Kuh, & Carini (2005) utilize the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey instrument to analyze international students' level of campus engagement (e.g., interaction with faculty or staff, participation in co-curricular activities or student groups, etc.) compared to U.S. students at similar institutions. Although studies like this provide important information on international students studying in the United States, they fail to account for the unique experiences of international students living in a foreign country. International students are complex students whose lives cannot be understood as being bound by the borders of individual countries—let alone college campuses (Gargano, 2009; King & Raghuram, 2013). Such a limited focus does not take into account how international students may be able to look not only to their institution of higher education for academic and social support. For example, international students from Europe have looked for support from family back home, the government of their sending country,¹ and in some instances local migrant communities (Carlson, 2013; Gargano, 2009; King & Raghuram, 2013; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Soong, 2016).

Deficit Approach of Acculturation and Adaptation

Current education research on international students has striven to more fully understand the experiences and needs of this student population by using theoretical perspectives and methods specifically designed to capture international student experiences that differ from those of their U.S. counterparts. Education research looking at the needs of international students in the United States has focused on acculturation (e.g., culture shock, learning U.S. customs,

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1. Sending country is a common term found in migration literature that refers to a country where a migrant has citizenship but has moved away from. This term does not connote a country that is actively sending one of its citizens to another country. Sending countries provide varying levels of support to their citizens living abroad. Receiving country is the opposite of this term (i.e., a country in which a migrant has moved to) (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003).

difficulties with English language, etc.) (Cadieux & Wehrly, 1986; Koyama, 2009; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Stevens, Emil, & Yamashita, 2010; Uba, 1994), cultural differences that keep international students from using support services (e.g., reticence of some international students to seek help from mental health professionals) (Aubrey, 1991; Korobova, 2012; Mori, 2000), difficulty making friends with U.S. students (Lehto, Cai, Fu, Chen, 2014), discrimination due to their race or ethnicity (Hanassab, 2009; Lee & Rice, 2007; Sherry, Thomas, Chui, 2009), or a lack of institutional support from faculty or staff due to cultural differences (Bista, 2015; Lee, 2010; Mamiseishvili, 2012).

While education research on international students has shifted from a strictly institutional focus, much of the current research on international students in the United States still fails to account for the full gamut of experiences this student population has as foreign nationals studying outside their country of citizenship. This is largely due to research taking a deficit view of the international student experience in which international students' family backgrounds, personal traits, and culture are all deemed to be a detriment to their ability to be successful at U.S. institutions of higher education instead of as a potential asset to aid them in their success. "Most of the literature on international student experiences has attributed their problems to 'adaptation', 'transition' and 'coping', implying that although they are at a disadvantage, foreigners must somehow simply endure, overcome, and then integrate into the host culture" (Lee, 2010, p. 69).

For example, in a qualitative study concerning Turkish graduate students' perceptions of graduate courses at a U.S. university, Tatar (2005) via interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations found that Turkish students' culture resulted in them being more reticent to contribute to classroom discussion compared to their U.S. counterparts who tended to dominate

in-class discussions. Although Tatar makes apt recommendations for how faculty can improve their classrooms to allow international students to more readily participate, this study still is founded on the premise that these international students' culture is solely a liability to their educational progress that their institution needs to address and help international students overcome.

This view of the international student experience is not dissimilar to the deficit view of minoritized U.S. students that Yosso (2005) has highlighted. Yosso argues that the social capital (i.e., resources whether real or potential which are nurtured by groups such as families or communities in which an individual belongs) (Tierney, 2006) and the cultural capital (i.e., linguistic or cultural tools which create a disposition within an individual that allows them to obtain social or economic goods) (Tierney, 2006) of those outside of dominant groups are not appropriately valued in educational settings. Yosso (2005) highlights how the reproduction of social norms—primarily social norms of the dominant White middle or upper class—results in students outside of dominant social groups being viewed as not having the social or cultural capital needed to successfully navigate higher education systems. This is based on the erroneous assumption that only forms of social or cultural capital stemming from dominant groups are able to confer to individuals the knowledge or ability to successfully navigate college life. Consequently, schools wrongly assume any academic or social struggles are the result of minoritized students not having the social capital needed to be successful (Yosso, 2005).

Disparities in access to forms of social and cultural capital do exist along racial and socioeconomic lines; however, this does not mean students who are non-White or who are from working class backgrounds do not have access to any social capital (Yosso, 2005). This narrow understanding of whose culture is able to provide students with assistance and support to succeed

socially and academically overlooks other forms of capital that students outside of dominant racial or economic groups can rely on. For example, minoritized students in the U.S. are often able to draw from linguistic capital (i.e., communication skills such as storytelling or bilingual ability), familial capital (i.e., support from family or chosen family members), or their own forms of social capital (i.e., friends or acquaintances both within and outside of their institution of higher education) as a means to help them persist (Yosso, 2005). Overlooking these additional forms of capital neglects valuable resources to that can assist students from non-dominant racial or socioeconomic groups while in college.

In the same way that a deficit view of minoritized U.S. students can prevent institutions of higher education from being able to build upon this student population's unique forms of social and cultural capital, a similar deficit view of international students results in a misunderstanding that international students do not bring with them a unique culture of their own that can be used to support their education and career goals. Consequently, efforts to fill international students' gaps in cultural knowledge become the paramount activity of U.S. colleges and universities to aid international students in being academically and socially successful. Much of the research on international students helps to solidify this deficit view of international students by focusing on interventions to help these students shed their international identity through improving their English language skills, adapting to a new culture, or relying on U.S. forms of cultural capital as a means to be academically and socially successful.

Taking a deficit approach fails to acknowledge international students studying in a foreign country bring with them mobility capital² and are part of transnational social networks that span beyond the borders of not only their institution of higher education but also beyond the borders of their sending or receiving countries (Carlson, 2013; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). The

ability of both of these unique forms of capital to aid international students in being academically successful is too often ignored in education research. While research in the field of education has primarily focused on acculturation and adaptation to a new environment, studies in sociology have moved beyond this narrow focus. Research on how pathways to lawful permanent residency or citizenship being tied to higher education in a receiving country impacts international students' major selection (Robertson, 2011), or how the need of certain international students to obtain employment in their receiving country to provide remittances to family in their sending country (Raghuram, 2013) have all provided a broader understanding of the international student experience.

Potential to View International Students Through a Migration Lens

International students studying in the United States primarily study under non-immigrant visa categories (F-1, J-1 or M-1), where their stated intent is to temporarily reside in the United States and then return to their country of citizenship after completing their studies. Although legally international students in the U.S. are considered sojourners who will only temporarily reside in the U.S. and then depart after completing their studies (U.S. State Department, 2017), in reality many international students seek to remain in the U.S. beyond the end of their studies—typically transitioning from student visas, to work visas (e.g., H-1B), and then eventually becoming lawful permanent residents (aka green card holders) or U.S. citizens. Additionally,

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2. Mobility capital will be further examined later in sections pertaining to this study's theoretical framework. Briefly, mobility capital comes from the work of Murphy-Lejeune (2002) who built upon Bourdieu's (1986) concept of habitus and his various forms of capital. Murphy-Lejeune conceptualized a process by which international students previous life experiences not only lead them to study in a country where they are not citizens, but to also build upon these previous life experiences to successfully navigate the culture and academic expectations of the nation in which they chose to study.

migration studies have moved beyond the notion that migration is a onetime or permanent decision (Portes & Borocz, 1989; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990; Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995; Waldinger, 2015). Contemporary research on the migrant experience accounts for the reality that many migrants choose to temporarily study or work in a receiving country with the intention to eventually repatriate (Carling, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2008). This is supported by migrants sending remittances to support immediate family members or building remittance homes in their sending country where they plan to one day return (Boccagni, 2013; Carling, 2008; Choate, 2007; Foner, 2005; Iskander, 2011) as well as maintaining dual citizenship (Faist, 2000). Consequently, regardless of the intention of international students—whether they plan to immediately return home after earning their degree, temporarily work in the U.S. after earning their degree, or permanently immigrate to the U.S.—international students’ experiences can still be potential understood through a migration lens.

The Migrant Experience

Over the past 30 years, literature on the experiences of migrants relocating to developed countries—like the United States—has moved beyond a focus on assimilation of migrants into their receiving country or push-pull factors that lead migrants to resettle in a new country (e.g., sociopolitical turmoil in a sending country that results in migrants fleeing their homeland or the availability of better jobs or wages in a receiving country pulling migrants from a sending country that does not offer its citizens a similar economic opportunity) (Brubaker, 1992; Choate, 2007; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Portes & Borocz, 1989; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990). Instead, migration research has taken a broader understanding of the migrant experience by accounting for how mobility capital enables individuals and groups to be better situated to successfully navigate life in a new country (Carlson, 2013; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002), the ways in which the

migrant community transcends national borders resulting in a transnational migrant identity (Geddie, 2013; Gabaccia, 2000; Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995; Waldinger, 2015), and how different forms of context of reception in a receiving country alters immigrants' decisions to migrate and the life that they have in their adopted country (Portes & Borocz, 1989; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990).

Research Questions

There is limited research on whether or not international students in the United States are similarly utilizing their mobility capital or looking to the greater migrant community in their home country and in the United States to aid them in navigating academic life at a U.S. college or university (Gargano, 2009; King & Raghuram, 2013; Soong, 2016). Research is needed that moves beyond viewing international students as merely members of an academic community that is restricted to only the confines of an institution of higher education and instead takes into consideration how international students are able to draw support for the higher education endeavors through similar avenues used by migrants (Gargano, 2009; King & Raghuram, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how international students in the U.S. utilize forms of capital and migrant networks to navigate the U.S. higher education system to achieve their educational goals. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What prior experiences have cultivated forms of capital in undergraduate international students that enable them to be successful academically and socially while studying at a U.S. institution of higher education?
2. What networks are undergraduate international students able to draw support from to aid them in navigating their U.S. institution of higher education?

These questions were answered through a combination of in-person interviews with international students studying at a postsecondary institution in the U.S. as well as document analysis of websites of groups and organizations that offer support and guidance to international students. Findings from this study identified unique forms of mobility capital that are developed by international students prior to their arrival to the U.S., particularly through education activities designed to prepare future international students to study in a foreign country. Additionally, this study identified that international students draw upon support from a large transnational network that spans the globe during their postsecondary studies, but have limited interaction with migrant communities in the U.S. outside of those who are family or family friends.

Significance

An understanding of how international students utilize mobility capital and their transnational networks allows for a fuller understanding of international students and the ways in which they obtain support to achieve their education goals. Understanding the full experience of international students will better enable U.S. institutions of higher education to support their international student populations by more fully comprehending this student population's needs and how these students meet these needs. U.S. institutions of higher education will be able to create support programs and interventions that build upon outside networks to better aid international students in obtaining their social and academic outcomes.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

An analysis of how international students utilize mobility capital and their transnational networks first requires an understanding of the historical background of why international students choose to come to the United States and the problems that they encounter once they arrive. The following literature review first provides background on the motivations for U.S. colleges and universities to recruit international students and matriculate increasingly larger numbers of non-U.S. students. Second, it explicates the historical motivations for international students from China and India to choose to study in the United States. It then discusses research on the impediments to international students' academic and social success and their perceptions of the support that they receive from their institutions of higher education. Fourth, an overview of how previous research fails to account for the full international student experience is offered, concluding with how some contemporary research has striven to move beyond deficit approaches to understanding the needs of international students. Finally, a theoretical framework is offered that more fully captures the experiences of international students.

Trends Leading to Recruitment of International Students by U.S. Higher Education

Institutions

While the number of international students enrolling at U.S. colleges and universities has consistently been increasing since the completion of WWII, over the past 20 years there has been an exponential upsurge in the number of international students choosing to come to the United States. In 1997 there was a total of 481,280 international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities (Institute of International Education, 2019a). Twenty years later the number of international students increased by 224 percent, for a total of 1,078,822 (Institute of International Education, 2019a). As of 2019, the five largest groups of international students coming to the

U.S. were China (363,341), India (196,271), South Korea (196,271), Saudi Arabia (44,432), and Canada (25,909) (Institute of International Education, 2019a). Numerous factors have been identified as reasons why U.S. colleges and universities have increased their recruitment of international students and have been matriculating ever-larger numbers of these students. Two of the most salient factors for why colleges and universities are actively increasing their international student enrollments are the impacts of globalization on higher education institutions (Altbach & Knight, 2007) and economic necessity (Deschamps & Lee, 2014; Lee & Rice, 2007).

Globalization and higher education

Globalization—the increasing connectivity of people throughout the world and the greater ease for money, culture, and ideas to transcend borders—has altered nearly every facet of modern life, including higher education systems throughout the world. Rapid technological innovation has altered communication, travel, and knowledge production by shrinking the barrier that geographic distance once played (Knight, 2004). Increased connectivity via the internet and the proliferation of technological devices (e.g., computers, smart phones, tablets, etc.) have allowed for more direct interaction between disparate cultures and the ability for products, ideas, and money to more freely transcend geographic distance.

The impact of globalization on all aspects of contemporary life necessitates that individuals have global competencies to be employed in a workforce that operates beyond national borders and to participate in the electoral process in an informed manner. Businesses—whether they are multinational corporations or small independently owned enterprises—operate in a global context where materials are globally sourced and products are marketed and sold throughout the world (Dunning, 2014). This requires that employees have an understanding of cultural differences as well as factors that impact the global economy in order for them to be

effective in jobs that require engagement beyond the borders of the United States (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2004). Similarly, citizens in democratic societies must have an understanding of the global nature of the world in order to participate in the electoral process in an informed manner (Knight, 2012). For example, international trade agreements (e.g., NAFTA) or geopolitical realignment (e.g., the recent decision of the United Kingdom to exit the European Union) require one to have an understanding of how these policies impact and connect individuals across national borders in order to be informed in voting on these issues. Because of the need for cross-cultural competencies to engage in the workforce and political process, U.S. colleges and universities strive to impart global perspectives to all of their students (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Global perspectives are often incorporated into university life through globalizing the curriculum (i.e., including texts and theories beyond those originating in Western Europe or the United States), increasing transnational collaboration on research, and increasing the number of international students on campus (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The latter of these methods is done in the hope that increasing the number of international students on campus will produce more opportunities for globally diverse viewpoints to be discussed in the classroom as well as among students through the regular course of their days (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Miller & Guo, 2013). More international students not only bring global perspectives to campus, but a variety of perspectives through matriculating students from a broad array of countries and cultures.

Economic need for international students

Although a frequently stated goal of increasing international student enrollments at U.S. colleges and universities is to contribute to the global perspectives of the entire student population, there is reason to doubt that U.S. postsecondary institutions are admitting larger

numbers of international students solely to bring a diversity of viewpoints to their campuses. At some institutions, senior international officers indicate that their institutions primarily recruit international students—who typically pay higher nonresident tuition at public colleges and universities and who may not need financial assistance to attend private schools—as a means to increase revenue (Deschamps & Lee, 2014; Lee & Rice, 2007). The recruitment of international students has proven to be a financial boon for U.S. colleges and universities with international students annually contributing an estimated \$36.9 billion to the U.S. economy (NAFSA, 2017). Financial motivations tend to be the dominant reason that international student enrollments have increased (Deschamps & Lee, 2014; Lee & Rice, 2007). There are two primary motivations for increasing the number of international students at public institutions of higher education and at least one motivator for private institutions of higher education: First, decreases in public higher education appropriations by state governments; second, the need for students who can pay non-need based tuition at private colleges and universities; third, international students provide inexpensive academic labor as teaching assistants or graduate student researchers.

Decreases in public funding have created budget deficits at many public colleges and universities necessitating that they recruit full-tuition paying students to help meet fiscal shortages (Johnstone, 2011; Zusman 2011). In the 2000/01 academic year, the average state appropriation for higher education was \$9,910³ per each fully enrolled student (Baum & Johnson, 2015). By the 2014/15 academic year, this number dropped to \$7,570 per fully enrolled student (Baum & Johnson, 2015).

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3. Adjusted for inflation to 2015 U.S. dollars.

At public colleges and universities, international students typically pay higher out of state tuition creating an economic incentive for public higher education institutions to recruit these students (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Altbach, Reisberg, Rumbley, 2010). The average cost of tuition and required fees at public four-year institutions of higher education for in-state students in the 2015/16 academic year was \$8,778 while the average cost of out-of-state students—which most international students are considered—was \$24,354 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017a). On average, out-of-state students are paying 277 percent more in tuition and required fees than their in-state counterparts at public four-year institutions. This makes international students a lucrative option for many public colleges and universities who need to increase revenue derived from tuition to offset the decrease in state appropriations to public higher education.

Private institutions of higher education similarly are financially motivated to recruit international students to increase their total pool of applicants who are capable of matriculating without the assistance of need-based financial aid (Altbach & Knight, 2007). On average, students attending private nonprofit four-year institutions of higher education paid \$32,250 in tuition and required fees (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017b). Of the full-time students enrolled at private nonprofit four-year institutions, 82.4 percent received grants from their school, with the average grant being worth \$17,845 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017c). Recruitment of international students allows private colleges and universities to be able to increase the pool of eligible applicants who do not need institutional grants to cover the cost of attendance, allowing these institutions to increase their overall revenue derived from tuition and required fees.

Finally, international students—particularly at the graduate level—provide inexpensive academic labor as teaching or research assistants. Utilizing graduate students as teaching assistants or research assistants is more cost effective than hiring additional faculty to teach courses or to assist in research (Black & Stephan, 2009). Loss of state funding and the privatization of many aspects of higher education in the United States have forced many colleges and universities to find ways to reduce operating costs (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2005). While utilizing academic labor of graduate students is a crucial means to achieve this goal, there are often not enough potential graduate student workers who can be drawn from the U.S. population. Many graduate departments simply would not exist without international students (National Foundation for American Policy, 2017). For example, 81 percent of Electrical Engineering, 79 percent of all Computer Science, and 63 percent of all Economics graduate students and postdoctoral scholars are international students or lawful permanent residents (i.e., green card holders) (National Foundation for American Policy, 2017). Without international students, many graduate departments would cease to exist, resulting in a loss of inexpensive academic labor that international students provide their universities. This need for inexpensive academic labor remains a key reason that international student recruitment is unlikely to abate in the long-term.

International students provide a clear financial benefit to U.S. colleges and universities, making it unlikely that these institutions will cease to aggressively recruit international students in the future. Recent decisions made by the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government have resulted in a decline in the number of international students enrolling in the United States for the first time since the 2003/04 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2019a; Redden, 2017, November 13). Nativist and Islamophobic rhetoric and policies have suppressed international student enrollment—particularly from Muslim majority countries like Saudi Arabia—

causing a decline in first-time international student enrollments at U.S. institutions of higher education.

Despite this dip in enrollments, there are reasons to believe that international students will not cease to be a part of the student population at many colleges and universities in the United States. First, colleges and universities are still dependent on international students for the economic reasons previously discussed. If recruitment of international students from countries like Saudi Arabia drop, then institutions of higher education are likely to look to other countries for new international student enrollments or to decrease entrance standards to help maintain their current international student enrollment levels. Second, the United States still contains some of the most globally elite institutions of higher education that provide a pathway to working in the U.S. economy making the United States a prime destination for international students despite recent anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies and increased competition for international students from universities in other nations (Kim, Bankart, Jiang, & Brazil, 2018).

Trends Leading to International Students Coming to U.S. Higher Education Institutions

Institutions of higher education are not the only ones who benefit from international students enrolling at U.S. colleges and universities. International students are also able to benefit from enrolling in the United States in at least two ways. First, international students benefit from enrolling at a U.S. college or university by gaining access to globally elite institutions of higher education that may not be available to them in their country of citizenship. Second, benefits of U.S. student visas provide international students with a pathway to remain and work in the United States after earning their degrees.

The number of college age students is increasing throughout the world; however, this increase in the number of college age students is not evenly distributed across countries. Instead,

increase in demand for a college education is primarily located in Asian and Latin American countries (Van der Wende, 2003). However, capacity in many countries—particularly in developing countries—has not kept pace with the increase in higher education demand. This lack of higher education capacity is troubling since having a college degree has become a prerequisite to participate in the global economy (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Tertiary education capacity not catching up to demand for postsecondary` education in some countries, coupled with the necessity of earning a degree, has forced students from throughout the world to look to countries like the United States as a means to be able to have access to higher education (Van der Wende, 2003). In countries where there is a developed higher education system, college aged students are still looking to the U.S. to gain access to highly ranked globally elite institutions of higher education which they believe will provide a pathway to work either in the U.S. or in their country of citizenship (Kim, Bankart, Jiang, & Brazil, 2018).

The United States has become a draw for many international students not only for its ability to provide them with access to higher education, but also due to benefits of the F-1 student visa. International students who have earned a degree while on an F-1 student visa are able to obtain temporary work authorization that enables them to work part-time in the United States during their time as a student and for increasingly longer lengths post-graduation. Optional Practical Training (OPT) grants all F-1 students who have earned a degree in the United States 12-months of work authorization that is directly related to their major and degree level (USCIS, 2017a). An additional 24-month extension of OPT is available to F-1 students who earned a degree in a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics field as identified by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), allowing some international students to work in the United States for three years on a F-1 student visa (USCIS, 2017a). Similarly, the J-1 student

visa (i.e., a visa typically utilized by temporary exchange visitors) allows international students the ability to work in the United States using Academic Training—a benefit of the J-1 visa—for up to 18 months after they complete their program of study (USCIS, 2017b).

These forms of work authorization provide international students with a legal pathway into the U.S. workforce. This allows students to eventually apply for more permanent work based visas (e.g., H-1B) and in some cases a pathway to lawful permanent residence or citizenship. For international students who want the option to more permanently live in the United States, these forms of work authorization make earning a degree at a U.S. college or university particularly appealing.

Despite the appeal that U.S. institutions of higher education have, they are increasingly facing competition for international students from other Western nations that have seen their international student enrollments increase as U.S. enrollments of international students have waned in recent years (OECD, 2019). Other nations (e.g., Canada and Australia) not only have globally elite institutions of higher education but also have made changes to their immigration laws that have contributed to their capturing an increasingly larger share of international student enrollments in recent years (Choudaha, Orosz, & Chang, 2012; Kim et al., 2018; Wadhwa, 2016). So while international students may be able to benefit from studying in the U.S., such benefits are able to be found in other nations which has increased the competition for international students. International students will likely continue to matriculate at U.S. colleges and universities; however, the number of international students who opt to come to the U.S. will likely continue to decrease in the near future.

Trends Leading to an Increase in Chinese and Indian International Students

The two leading countries of origin for international students at U.S. colleges and universities are China and India. Together, these two countries account for just over 51 percent of all international students in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2019b). Given the nature of higher education in each of these two nations and the demand that their populaces have for tertiary education, it is unlikely that the inflow of international students from these countries to the United States will abate despite the current political climate.

Chinese student motivations for studying in the United States

Beginning with the opening of China in the late 1970s, China has undergone a change from a communist to a socialist market economy (Hayhoe, 1996). The opening of China and its adoption of market-based principles in select areas have made earning a college degree a necessary requirement for accessing well-paying jobs in China (Hayhoe, 1996; Rhoads, Shi, & Change, 2014). This need for a college degree has increased demand for Chinese higher education at a rate faster than what China can provide its populace. From 1980 to 1995, China experienced an accelerated massification of its higher education system unlike any country had previously undergone (Hayhoe, 1996). During this period, new enrollments in Chinese colleges and universities more than doubled (Hayhoe, 1996). Chinese demand for higher education outpaced China's ability to establish new tertiary education institutions and exceeded its ability to expand capacity at existing institutions of higher education (Hayhoe, 1996). Rapid massification additionally deteriorated the quality of higher education in China, even at elite institutions, with faculty to student ratios increasing from an average of 8 to 1 in the 1980s to an average of 22 to 1 by 2004 (Lin & Liu, 2007).

Although China has grown its higher education capacity at an astonishingly fast rate, it is still not able to meet its populace's demand for tertiary education. Gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education has steadily improved, growing from 20.8 percent in 2007 to 43.39 percent in 2015 (UNESCO, 2017a). This still lags behind other developed countries, like the United States, which had an 85.8 percent gross enrollment ratio in Tertiary education in 2015. (UNESCO, 2017b). This lack of capacity has led some Chinese to look to higher education institutions in other countries—particularly the United States—as a means to gain access to tertiary education.

At the end of the 20th century, China began a push to elevate a select few of its research universities with the goal of these institutions becoming recognized as globally elite institutions of higher education. In the 1990s, China provided funding to its top 118 universities through project 211 (Li, 2004) and additional funding to its 39 most prestigious institutions of higher education through project 955 (Li, 2004). By providing additional federal funds to select institutions of higher education, China has made tremendous strides in elevating the global prestige of some of its institutions of higher education. China has furthered the goals of project 211 and project 955 through implementing its Double First-class Initiative which aims to have by 2030 numerous Chinese universities be ranked overall in the top 100 of the world as well as have numerous Chinese universities be highly ranked in specific subject areas (Wei & Johnstone, 2019). China has been successful in closing rankings gap between its universities and those found in other industrialized nations; however, its share of highly ranked globally elite institutions of higher education still lags behind those in the North America and Europe (Huang, 2015). Chinese students who have opted to study in a Western nation report that one of their strongest motivations to study outside of China was to gain access to a highly ranked university (Cebolla-Boado, Hu, & Soysal, 2018). As the Double First-class Initiative reaches its

culmination in 2030, the share of highly ranked institutions of higher education in China is likely to increase. However, given the large number of college aged students in China it is unlikely that China will be able to improve the rankings of a sufficient number of its postsecondary education institutions to meet the demand of its population. Given the importance in institutional rankings in the college choice process of Chinese students there will continue to exist a segment of Chinese students that will look toward Western nations for access to highly ranked universities.

Indian student motivations for studying in the United States

India's modern higher education system was built by the British government based on the model of the University of London (Jayaram, 2004). At its inception, India's higher education system was designed to serve the needs of the British and aid them in maintaining control over the economic resources derived from India's land and people. When India achieved independence from Britain it had 20 universities and 636 colleges which needed to be converted to meet the needs of the Indian people (Jayaram, 2004). Over the next fifty years, India experienced a drastic increase in the number of colleges and universities as it increased its capacity to meet the needs of its large populace. By the 1998-99 academic year, there were 214 universities, 9,703 colleges, and 887 polytechnics, which enrolled 6,755,000 students (Jayaram, 2004). Despite these impressive figures, large segments of the Indian population still does not have access to higher education. Access to higher education is unevenly distributed throughout India causing individuals from lower socioeconomic status groups to lag behind in access (Jayaram, 2004).

Compounding the access problem is a lack of quality across different colleges and universities. While some institutions of higher education in India are renowned for their quality of education and research (e.g., Indian Institutes of Technology at Chennai, Kanpur, Karagpur,

Mumbai, & New Delhi or the Indian Institute of Management or the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research), the majority of Indian colleges and universities lack quality (Jayaram, 2004). Consequently, numerous students only have access to institutions that lack quality controls, making them unable to obtain the technical skills desired by employers. It has been estimated that only 15 percent of students who have earned a general education degree and no more than 30 percent of students who have earned a technical education degree from an Indian college or university have the knowledge and skills needed to be employable (Nasscom-Mackinsey Report, 2005). Lack of access to quality education has led to stern competition to obtain access to one of India's elite colleges or universities as well as students looking to higher education institutions outside of India, with the United States being the primary destination for Indian international students (Jayaram, 2004; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

International Student Support Needs

International students enrolling at U.S. colleges and universities is mutually beneficial to both students and postsecondary institutions of education. Despite these benefits, institutions of higher education still fall short of meeting the unique needs of their international student populations. While international students are an incredibly diverse population of students who cannot easily be grouped due to differences in cultural backgrounds, race, ethnicity, or linguistic background, prior research has identified four common challenges international students face in the United States: English language proficiency, adjustment to academic standards of U.S. colleges and universities, navigating bureaucracy around student visas, and adjustment to living in a new culture.

English language proficiency

International students often require additional support that is not commonly needed by their U.S. peers. Particularly English language skills—both written and verbal communication—are something that international students often rely on their institution to aid them with developing (Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). Problems associated with English language skills are a primary impediment to international students' succeeding academically at U.S. colleges and universities (Koyama, 2009; Stevens, Emil, & Yamashita, 2010). Lack of English language skills often reduces international students' ability to understand lectures or have the confidence to participate during in-class discussions to the detriment of their grades (Cadieux & Wehrly, 1986). International students who have a firm grasp of academic English may still struggle with colloquial terms or regional slang, preventing them from engaging with their peers or the general campus community (Uba, 1994). This lack of English proficiency can result in feelings of isolation, which has been identified as a leading problem for international students studying in English speaking countries (Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). It is therefore crucial that international students who are non-native English speakers have support to improve their English competency so that they are able to succeed socially and academically while they are studying in the United States.

Academic norms in the United States

Depending on the culture of the country from which international students originate, they may have grown up with different academic norms than what are found in the United States (Abel, 2002). This can be the general structure of the curriculum or standards of academic integrity. Although the U.S. higher education system is often adapted by other countries to meet the education needs of their own populations, there frequently exist differences in the structure of

U.S. colleges and universities compared to the structures of other nations' tertiary education institutions. For example, choice in electives, the role of student affairs and academic affairs professionals, and an expectation of classroom participation by students all set the United States apart from other nations—particularly China and India (Abel, 2002; Bista, 2015; Ludeman, Osfield, Hidalgo, Oste, Wang, 2009; Tatar, 2005).

International students often have different expectations of the role they should play in the classroom. Cultural expectations of who processes authority to impart knowledge often results in international students being reticent to participate in classrooms as is often expected at U.S. colleges and universities (Bista, 2015; Koyama, 2009; Liu, 2001; Sakuraia, Parpalaa, Pyhältöa, & Lindblom-Ylännea, 2014). Through examining the classroom expectations of Asian international students, Koyama (2009) found that these students place value on knowledge imparted by faculty members while believing that other students in the classroom do not have the authority to contribute to their learning in the same way. This runs counter to the culture at many U.S. institutions of higher education where faculty expect students to actively participate in class discussions and offer counter arguments to ideas posed by faculty members and teaching assistants (Lee, 2014).

International students may further come from cultures with different standards for academic integrity than what are found in the United States or other Western societies. Requirements for citing research conducted by other authors or what constitutes plagiarism in general are not uniform throughout the world (Mori, 2000; Tatar, 2005; Zhai, 2002). Direct quoting large blocks of another author's writing without providing any citation may not be viewed as plagiarism at secondary or tertiary schools outside of the United States (Mori, 2000). This is typically due to international students from certain countries being taught throughout

their primary and secondary education that they should copy verbatim the writings of those who are more knowledgeable on a topic than they are in their written assignments instead of providing their own thoughts on a subject (Tatar, 2005). Violation of academic standards in the United States can result in the automatic failure of a course, harming a students' GPAs. At U.S. colleges and universities, the responsibility to educate international students on U.S. standards of academic integrity often is delegated to staff members and not faculty (e.g., student writing centers, student conduct offices, or international student offices) (NAFSA, 2014).

Navigating visa regulations

International students are subject to a host regulations stemming from their F-1, J-1, or M-1 visas that place restrictions on their academic and co-curricular choices. Unlike domestic students, international students must be enrolled full-time during the academic term (8 CFR 214.2 (f) (6)), have restrictions to international travel (8 CFR 214.2 (f) (4)), and can only engage in off-campus internships that are related to their degree (8 CFR 214.2 (f) (9)). Consequently, regular student activities require international students to navigate complex visa regulations that can often prevent them from being able to engage in academically, socially, or professionally fruitful activities (Sementelli, 2002). Failure to comply with regulations can result in international students' visas being terminated and necessitate their immediate departure from the United States, thus disrupting their academic progress. While schools admitting international students are required by federal law to provide them with advisors who are equipped to aid them in navigating these visa regulations (8 CFR 214.3 (k); 8 CFR 214.4), the decentralization of most U.S. colleges and universities creates the potential for international students to not be advised on every visa issue that can impact their studies (Sementelli, 2002).

Cultural adjustment and culture shock

Culture shock entails feeling stress, anxiety, or general uneasiness resulting from being in an environment with a culture that is different from one's own (Oberg, 1960). The majority of international students studying in the United States report experiencing at least minimal levels of culture shock during their first-year (Furnham, 1988; Olaniran, 1996, 1999; Selvadurai, 1992; Thomas & Althen, 1989). Culture shock can result in international students experiencing higher levels of homesickness than their U.S. counterparts, having a negative view of their institution of higher education, or cause them to struggle academically (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). Needing to adapt to a new culture has been found to be negatively correlated with international students being successful academically and socially while studying in the U.S. (Bista, 2015; Mamiseishvili, 2012).

Interaction with mental or psychological health professionals has been shown to contribute to international students adjusting to studying in the United States as well as succeeding academically (Aubrey, 1991; Dillard & Chisolm, 1983; Kwon, 2009; Mori, 2000). By working with mental health professionals international students can better understand how living in a foreign environment affects them and learn coping mechanisms to aid their adjusting to life in the United States without having to feel like they must assimilate to the United States and abandon their own culture (Mori, 2000). Despite the benefits of interacting with mental health practitioners, many international students indicate that they are not comfortable seeking help from a psychologist due to the negative stigma attached to seeking mental health.

Cultural differences further have the potential to alienate international students from their U.S. peers (Lehto, Cai, Fu, Chen, 2014) as well as result in direct discrimination against international students (Hanassab, 2009; Lee & Rice, 2007; Sherry, Thomas, Chui, 2009).

International students routinely report that they struggle to establish meaningful relationships with U.S. students, particularly during their first year of studies (Lee, 2010; Zhao, Kuh, Carini, 2005). Feelings of isolation from the campus community has been shown to be a negative predictor of international students' GPA and persistence (Bista, 2015; Mamiseishvili, 2012). Feelings of isolation due to cultural differences are exacerbated by direct or indirect discrimination that many international students experience on their college campus. International students have reported being discriminated against due to their perceived race, religion, or English language ability (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005; Hanassab, 2006; Lee, 2010). International students who struggle to make strong bonds with U.S. students are thus further isolated by experiences of discrimination.

International Students' Perceptions of Institutional Support

Research conducted since international student enrollments started becoming proportionally larger at U.S. institutions of higher education has shown that international students self-report that they have less engagement with faculty and staff compared to their U.S. counterparts (Kher, Juneau, & Molstad, 2003; Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Rhee & Sagaria, 2004). There are fewer opportunities for international students to be mentored by faculty, since faculty often give preference to U.S. students (Lee & Rice, 2007) viewing international student mentees as a lower priority than U.S. students (Rhee & Sagaria, 2004).

Faculty and staff misunderstandings of the cultural norms of some international students may additionally result in professors not recognizing that international students are in need of help or mentorship (Lee, 2014; Robertson et al., 2000), or have superior academic talents worthy of further developing through mentorship. For example, humility and modesty are traits valued by the cultures of some international students, but faculty can easily mistake these traits as

indicators that students lack mastery or interest in course material (Lee, 2014). Similarly, student affairs and academic affairs professionals often do not reach out to help international students due to them erroneously attributing academic or acculturation problems to a lack of motivation on the part of international students instead of international students' unfamiliarity with support services available to them in the United States (Robertson et al., 2000). Consequently, international students do not always receive the institutional support that they need to be successful academically or socially.

Despite international students indicating that they do not feel supported by faculty and staff, many international students still manage to be successful academically and socially during their studies in the United States. Although support from faculty and staff would help aid international students in being academically and socially successful (Andrade, 2006; Aubrey, 1991; Bista, 2015; Lee, 2010; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Mori, 2000), international students are still able to succeed without this support. This suggests that there exists additional forms of support that international students are able to rely on to be successful that has not been adequately captured in the existing international student literature.

Incomplete Understanding of International Student Support

While there exists a large body of research on the different obstacles that international students encounter at U.S. colleges and universities, the approaches that many of these studies take to identify and solve these dilemmas fail to account for the full international student experience for three primary reasons. First, they overlook background characteristics of international students that may differ from those of their U.S. counterparts. Second, the solutions they offer are ones that are bound to just students' institutions of higher education. Finally, they

view the culture and background of international students as a liability and not as a potential asset.

Limited view of background characteristics

A large segment of the research on the experiences of international students has failed to account for the unique background experiences of this student population. This is primarily due to the fact that much of the quantitative research on international students utilizes pre-existing survey instruments or conceptualizations of student needs that were built around the needs of U.S. students (e.g., Tinto's (1975) model of student retention, Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model, or Pike, Kuh, & Gonyea's (2003) college student experience model). These models fail to account for the unique backgrounds and forms of support available to international students, resulting in them providing inadequate understandings of the international student experience as well as offering insufficient interventions to address impediments to these students' education. For example, Tinto's (1975) model of student retention was created through synthesizing Durkheim's model of suicide—via Van Gennep's (1909) rites of passage theory—and existing literature from psychology, sociology, and education concerning student support as a means to predict what may cause a student to drop out of college. Tinto's model included institutional factors (e.g., learning support), integration into the campus community (both academically and socially), family attributes (e.g., mother's education level, socioeconomic status), and student backgrounds (e.g., prior education qualifications). Despite being a fairly robust model, family attributes and individual student factors in models like Tinto's were built on previous understanding of just students from the U.S. International students often do not neatly fit into these conceptualizations of student backgrounds and support needs resulting in

surveys that were built based on models of U.S. student engagement and retention to not account for their full experience.

Through much of the longitudinal data on student experiences being built on models of student engagement or persistence that were designed to understand the needs of U.S. students, these data sets often fail to identify problems that international students encounter or do not offer adequate solutions to these issues. Most longitudinal surveys of college students do not fully take into account the unique background needs of international students. For example, data stemming from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) does not collect data on international students' race, instead treating being international as just one race (IPEDS, 2017). This limits research stemming from this data source to be able to identify different international student needs across different racial groups (e.g., the experiences of White international students vs. the needs of Asian international students). Existing quantitative surveys that do collect data on international students race often fail to collect data on their country of citizenship, disaggregate race (e.g., Indian vs. Malaysian instead of the more general Asian), or disaggregate ethnicity (e.g., Zhuang vs. Han instead of the more general Chinese) (Bista, 2015; Foot, 2009; Grayson, 2008; Korobova, 2012; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Zhao, Kuh, Carini, 2005, Zhou & Cole, 2016).

For example, Zhao, Kuh, and Carini (2005) utilized NSSE data to understand how international students engage in effective educational practices compared to their U.S. peers. This quantitative study contained a random sample of students ($n = 175,000$) who attended 317 different colleges and universities in 2001. Utilizing a combination of t-tests and multiple linear regression, Zhao et al. sought to understand if there exists a significant difference between international students' college engagement activities compared to their U.S. counterparts as well

as to understand how different aspects of students' backgrounds predict their institutional satisfaction. While Zhao et al.'s study made important contributions to the understanding of international student needs, it fails to disaggregate race, collect data on ethnicity, or control for participants' country of citizenship. Consequently, this study fails to account for how international students from disaggregated racial groups (e.g., Desi vs. Chinese instead of just Asian), different ethnicities, or different citizenship statuses alter international students' engagement with campus activities compared to their U.S. counterparts. By failing to take into consideration all aspects of international students' identities and backgrounds, most research on this student population fails to fully account for how international students understand and make meaning of their time within U.S. institutions of higher education (Gargano, 2009; King & Raghuram, 2013).

Support limited to institutions of higher education

Much of the previous research on international students fails to account for how their background experiences and network can potentially aid them in their studies by limiting the nexus of their lives to the confines of their institutions of higher education (Bista, 2015; Korobova, 2012; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Zhou, Kuh, & Carini, 2005; Zhou & Cole, 2016). Solutions offered for aiding international students tend to be centered on engagement with their college or university community through interacting with faculty or staff or through participating in co-curricular activities (e.g., participation in student groups, internships for credit, etc.) (Bista, 2015; Korobova, 2012; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Zhou, Kuh, & Carini, 2005; Zhou & Cole, 2016). Engagement with the campus community is certainly beneficial to international students, but this limited focus fails to account for how international students are further able to find support from their migrant community in the U.S., family back home, or the government of their sending

country (Carlson, 2013; Gargano, 2009; King& Raghuram, 2013; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Soong, 2016).

For example, Mamiseishvili (2011) utilized Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPSL) data to understand factors that lead international students to persist at U.S. postsecondary education institutions. This study used logistic regression to identify which factors predict international students' persistence after 3 years of attendance. Mamseishvili's study provided valuable insight into how international students' backgrounds and activities during their studies do or do not contribute to their persistence; however, activities examined were all limited to those contained within students' institutions of higher education (e.g., participation in study groups, contact with faculty or staff, participation in intramural or varsity sports, etc.). In doing so, Mamiseishvili ignores the unique experiences of international students living in a foreign country. An understanding of the lives of international students cannot be bound to just the confines of their college campuses (Gargano, 2009; King& Raghuram, 2013). Doing so ignores the potential academic and social support available to international students stemming from their family back home, the government of their sending country, and in some instances local migrant communities (Carlson, 2013; Gargano, 2009; King& Raghuram, 2013; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Soong, 2016).

Deficit view of international student cultures and backgrounds

A large segment of studies on international students have moved beyond reliance on pre-existing longitudinal survey data to more fully capture the needs of international students. Studies on the international student experiences are either creating custom quantitative survey instruments (Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000) or conducting qualitative inquiries that more directly capture the needs of international students living in a foreign culture (Cadieux &

Wehrly, 1986; Koyama, 2009; Stevens, Emil, & Yamashita, 2010; Uba, 1994), how English language ability effects their studies (Koyama, 2009; Stevens, Emil, & Yamashita, 2010), and areas where international students may struggle to adjust to academic norms in the U.S. (Koyama, 2009; Wang, 2009). While these studies have provided valuable insights into the international student experience that are not often found in studies built upon assumptions about U.S. students, they ultimately fail to account for international students' culture as being anything other than a potential obstacle to overcome. This is largely due to much of the research on international students focusing on their need to adapt to life in a new culture (Lee, 2010) instead of how their culture can potentially aid them in being successful academically or socially.

This approach to studying international students takes a deficit view of their culture, where the backgrounds and biographical features of international students are understood only as creating problems that need to be overcome. For example, Robertson, Line, Jones, and Thomas (2000) created their own survey instrument that more accurately accounts for the experiences of international students studying in Australia by asking participants questions directly related to the international student experience. This survey was completed by 409 international students (accounting for 79% of the total international student population) at a university in Australia. Participants were asked to rank in order of most to least importance problems they encountered as students relating to activities inside their university (e.g., feelings of isolation, difficulty in applying learning styles other than rote memorization, etc.), activities outside the university (e.g., difficulty understating slang or colloquial language, homesickness, difficulty making friends with locals, etc.), and language issues (e.g., lack of confidence in verbal skills, difficulty writing essays, difficulty in comprehension, etc.) (Robertson et al., 2000). While this study, and others like it, move the focus of international student research to the needs that this student population

has that their U.S. counterparts may not, ultimately the culture and background of international students is solely understood as a detriment to their ability to succeed on their campus. How international students' backgrounds could aid them in their studies is deemed irrelevant.

Conceptualizing international students' culture and background as a detriment to their ability to succeed is not only an issue in quantitative research, but is also found in many qualitative studies seeking to understand the international student experience. Qualitative studies frequently focused on international students being unfamiliar with cultural or academic norms, struggling with English language ability, or having difficulty connecting with U.S. students (Bodycott, 2012; Campbell, 2012; Heng, 2017; Shafaei, Nejati, Quazi, & Von der Heide, 2016; Song, 2019; Tatar, 2005, Wu, 2015). These studies tend to focus on how U.S. colleges and universities can develop new skills in international students rather than build upon existing strengths that international students already poses. Tatar (2005), for example, sought to understand international students' perceptions of classroom culture in the U.S. by conducting a qualitative study interviewing four Turkish graduate students (two male and two female) 26 times over a four-month period as well as through conducting classroom observations during 8 of the 11 courses these Turkish students were enrolled. Tatar revealed that Turkish international students were unsure of expectations placed on them by their professors and felt duress when they failed to meet the expectation to participate during class discussions. This dilemma was identified as stemming from international students' backgrounds attending undergraduate institutions in Turkey where the academic norms are different than what is found in the United States. Thus, the Turkish students' previous experiences were deemed to be a detriment to their education, with no consideration given for how these Turkish students' backgrounds and culture could potentially aid them in the U.S. classroom.

This approach to understanding international students is not limited to graduate students, but can also be found in research examining undergraduate international students. For example, Heng (2017) used a qualitative study to understand how U.S. colleges and universities can aid Chinese undergraduate international students in being successful academically and socially. Heng conducted a series of three interviews with 18 Chinese international students over one academic year. Interviews lasted 90 minutes and took place at the start of the academic year, at the midway point, and at the end of the academic year. These interviews focused on what participants did to prepare to study in the U.S. and how they believe their institutions could better serve their needs at different points throughout their first or second year in the U.S. Results from this study focused on international students being unfamiliar with academic norms in the U.S. (e.g., assessment methods for humanities coursework or academic support systems available at U.S. colleges and universities) or U.S. students or faculty making assumptions about Chinese international students abilities or dispositions. These findings and their implications are still focused on what U.S. institutions of higher education need to do in order to ameliorate the deficiencies of Chinese international students rather than identifying potential strengths of Chinese international students that their schools can build upon.

Moving beyond a deficit approach

If institutions of higher education are going to adequately support their international student populations, then researchers and practitioners need to cease treating the backgrounds and cultures of international students as a detriment to their ability to succeed academically and socially. Instead, there is a need to identify aspects of international students' backgrounds and cultures that can potentially be an asset to them during their studies in the U.S. Recently, there has been a push to expand the understanding of forms of social and cultural capital stemming

from background characteristics of non-White students that can help them achieve academic and social success during their postsecondary studies (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2014; Yosso, 2005). For example, Yosso (2005) advocates that education researchers and practitioners acknowledge the unique forms of social and cultural capital available to minoritized students and utilize these forms of capital to aid non-White students in their educational endeavors. Instead of viewing minoritized students as lacking forms of capital and needing to learn and acculturate to social norms derived largely from White upper-class populations, non-White students can instead be successful through building upon their own unique forms of capital. Forms of capital such as linguistic (i.e., students being multilingual or coming from ethnic communities where storytelling plays a crucial role), navigational (i.e., students ability to navigate systems that are not designed with their needs in mind), or aspirational (i.e., capital stemming from students' determination to be successful academically and professionally despite institutional or systemic barriers) may not be valued by institutions of higher education, but each of these forms of capital is capable of assisting students in successfully navigating their educational experience (Yosso, 2005).

While many international students may need assistance with adapting to life in the United States or may need help with English proficiency, this does not mean that to be successful they must completely abandon their culture and assimilate into U.S. norms. Contemporary research on the needs of international students has begun to move away from viewing the backgrounds and cultures of international students as a detriment to their education. Researchers do not negate the fact that cultural differences exist between many international students and the higher education institutions in which they enroll, but have started to not place the impetus to solve these issues solely on international students (Heng, 2016; Lee, 2010; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002;

Soong, 2016). Instead, researchers have begun to identify actions that universities can take to help ameliorate the dilemmas encountered by the international students they are actively recruiting. For example, Lee (2010) created an original survey instrument to understand if institutional satisfaction of international students at a research university in the Southwestern United States was correlated with students originating from predominantly White countries (PWC) or a non-predominantly White countries (NPWC). Lee revealed that students from NPWC—who presumably have more cultural differences from the United States than students from PWC—had less favorable views of their institutions than their PWC counterparts. This difference in institutional satisfaction was primarily attributed to institutions failing to prevent international students from experiencing discrimination as well as these institutions not striving to create a classroom setting that is nurturing of these students’ cultural differences. Thus, the problem international students encounter is not merely an issue of their lacking the skills or ability to be successful, but of a failing on the part of their institution to adequately defend them against discrimination or to provide them with the support they need to succeed academically and socially.

While research has begun to move past taking a deficit view of the international student experience, much of the research still fails to identify ways in which international students’ culture and backgrounds can be a potential aid during their studies. Further, recommendations for helping international students are entirely bound to their institutions of higher education, ignoring potential aid that may be available to this student population stemming from their transnational community. A conceptualization of the international student experience is therefore needed that not only moves the understanding of international student support beyond the

confines of their institution of higher education, but further seeks to understand how the culture and background of international students can potentially aid them in their studies.

Theoretical Framework

A conceptualization of international students' lives that is not confined to experiences bound by their institutions of higher education or which views their international student status as a detriment to their education is needed. To expand the understanding of the international student experience, I have synthesized three aspects of the migrant experience that are applicable to international students studying in the United States: how mobility capital stemming from the backgrounds of international students may aid them in persisting in a foreign country, how transnational networks spanning across national borders can provide international students cultural and academic support that can aid them in their time studying abroad, and how the context of reception in a receiving country can alter an international student's experiences both positively and negatively.

Mobility capital

Mobility capital stems from the work of Murphy-Lejeune (2002) who sought to understand how the backgrounds of European students studying outside of their country of citizenship in other European nations affected their choice to study abroad as well as their ability to navigate their lives in a foreign country. Building upon Bourdieu's (1986) concept of habitus and his various forms of capital, Murphy-Lejeune (2002) conceptualized a process by which the previous life experiences of international students not only lead them to study in a country where they are not citizens, but to also provide the social or cultural capital needed to successfully navigate the societal and academic expectations of the nation in which they chose to study.

Utilization of mobility capital as part of this study's theoretical framework will allow for a non-deficit conceptualization of social and cultural capital available to international students.

Murphy-Lejeune (2002) conducted a qualitative interview study from 1993 to 1996 in which she interviewed three groups of mostly European students. First, she interviewed 15 ERASMUS students originating from various Continental countries who were degree-seeking students at universities in Dublin, Ireland. Second, she studied 20 EAP students originating from 12 different European countries as well as one from New Zealand and one from Russia who were participating in short-term study abroad programs at universities in Dublin, Paris, or at Oxford. Finally, she interviewed 15 Language Assistants originating from Ireland or France who recently returned home after working throughout Europe.

From interviewing these participants, she conceptualized the idea of mobility capital that extends from four aspects of international students' lives: Family history, previous experience with mobility, their first experience with adaptation as an initiation, and personality features of the student (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). Each of these four elements of mobility capital contribute to international students developing a habitus of mobility (i.e., a disposition that makes them more likely to seek out life in a foreign country) as well as providing them with a form of capital that equips them to be better prepared to adjust to life in a foreign country (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Carlson, 2013).

Family history

The first aspect of mobility capital stems from an international student's family history (i.e., through ancestral connections to countries beyond where they are currently citizens) (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Carlson, 2013). For example, 1.5 and second generation migrants whose parents chose to immigrate to a foreign country are raised in a home environment where

cross-national mobility is normalized (Carlson, 2013). This normalization of cross-national mobility results in international students viewing life in a foreign country as a net positive experience, opposed to an experience that is wrought with uncertainty (Carlson, 2013). Thus, international students with a family history of mobility are often predisposed to live in a country other than where they were born (Carlson, 2013). Students who have a family history of mobility not only are more likely to seek out studying abroad, but also are more likely to have the social or cultural capital to be able to navigate the experience of studying in a foreign country. Additionally, 1.5 and second generation migrants are able to build upon forms of capital learned from the experiences of their migrant parents that enable them to better handle the experiences of living abroad. During the formative years of these students, they were able to observe the ways their parents maneuvered through a country with cultural, political, and social norms that varied from where their parents were born (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Carlson, 2013). This provides a valuable roadmap for cross-national experience that grants them a special ability to navigate life in a foreign country while international students.

Although family history often is the result of a parent who was a migrant, family history can extend to an individual's grandparents or beyond (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). Individuals whose grandparents or even great-grandparents were migrants to a new country pass on to them a tradition of seeking adventure or even knowledge of how to navigate the migration process. When the migration choices of previous generations result in grandchildren and their grandparents being raised in culturally different countries, grandchildren are often imparted with an affinity for divergent cultural norms which can result in these grandchildren being more comfortable in new or different cultural environments (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). This ability to be comfortable in new environments can not only encourage individuals to be migrants

themselves, but to also be more at ease in a foreign country whose culture differs from their sending country.

Previous experience with mobility

The second form of mobility capital is derived from prior experience outside of one's country of origin. This includes a broad array of experiences ranging from brief international vacations to temporarily residing in another country. Experiences outside of one's country of citizenship normalizes the experience of residing in a foreign country, thus instilling in the individual the propensity to study or work in a county other than where they are citizens (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). This holds true regardless of the cultural differences between the country where the individual is a citizen and the country where the individual spends time abroad (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). For example, an individual who grew up in Austria but spent a summer living in Germany would still derive mobility capital from spending time outside of their country of citizenship even though the cultural and linguistic differences between Austria and Germany are not as drastic as the cultural and linguistic differences between Austria and a non-Germanic country outside of Europe. Even time spent in countries that are similar to one's country of citizenship provides an individual with the experience of navigating bureaucracy of that country as well as exposes the individual to temporarily residing away from family and friends (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). Such time abroad normalizes the experience of being abroad which not only makes one more willing to study outside of their country of citizenship, but can also make the experience of studying in a foreign country less jarring (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002).

This does not mean that different types of prior experiences abroad confer to international students the same levels of mobility capital. The duration of an experience abroad, quality of contacts with natives, geographic or cultural proximity of the country of citizenship to the

country the student is visiting, and the age of one's first trip abroad all result in conferring different degrees of mobility capital (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). Additionally, these experiences are cumulative—each additional experience abroad builds upon the previous ones to provide increasing levels of mobility capital that enable an international student to be better prepared to navigate life in a foreign country (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002).

First experience of adaptation as initiation

The third form of mobility capital stems from the first experience an international student has adapting to a new environment (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). First experience of adaptation differs from students' previous experience with mobility since experiences with mobility do not necessarily require students to adapt to a new culture (e.g., an Austrian who grew up spending time living in Germany where culture and language are very similar). Additionally, a student's first experience of adapting to a new environment does not necessitate that they spend any time outside of the borders of their country of citizenship (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). A student spending time in a culturally different region of their country of citizenship can result in this student needing to navigate the experience of adapting to a new culture. For example, a student who grew up in rural Mississippi who leaves their hometown for the first time to visit New York City is likely to face challenges adjusting to a new culture and social norms despite never leaving their country of citizenship.

The experience of adapting to a new culture grants individuals firsthand experience of adjusting to a new culture, which confers upon them crucial skills that can aid them in navigating life in a foreign country (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). This additional form of mobility capital bestows individuals with skills that can aid them in not only adjusting to life in the United States as international students, but also in navigating their system of higher education. This can be

through developing the skills to adapt to new social norms or to even adapt to different forms of bureaucracies.

Finally, successfully navigating one's first experience with adaptation can further create in an international student the propensity to seek out additional cross-cultural experiences (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). These can be within one's country of citizenship (e.g., rural students visiting or moving to urban city centers) or outside of one's country of citizenship (e.g., studying at a university in another country).

Personality features of the potential wanderer

Murphy-Lejeune (2002) found that the international students who participated in her study all shared common personality features that made them likely to seek out being an international student as well as prepared them to live in a culture different than their own. Participants in her study were often extroverted and sociable making them more likely to be able to adapt to a new environment, even when that new environment was culturally different from where they were raised. Additionally, these students often were curious about the world around them and were interested in seeking out new and different experiences rather than what they have routinely experienced. Seeking out the experience of studying in a foreign country helped to feed participants' desire for new and different experiences. These personality traits further enabled participants to better deal with the experience of studying in a new culture and to minimize the effects of homesickness (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002).

Limitations of mobility capital

Although mobility capital provides some international students with the traits and abilities to better navigate their time studying in a foreign country, traits of mobility capital are not evenly distributed. Some international students may be able to build upon family history, but

do not have any personal experience with mobility. Similarly, some international students may have family history, personal experiences with mobility, have gone through a first experience capital with adaptation, but have none of the personal traits of a potential wanderer. As a result, not all international students will have even access to forms of mobility capital.

The applicability of mobility capital is further limited due to the four elements of mobility capital being identified through a sample that was limited to only European students who came from middle to upper socioeconomic status families. Because of these sample limitations, the four aspects of mobility capital that identified are generally the hallmarks of the elite (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). This is problematic since migrants' ability to use social and cultural capital differs based on class, gender, or ethnic group (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Cederberg, 2012; Erel, 2010; Kelly & Lusic, 2006). Even migrants originating from the same country have different access to forms of capital based on class, gender, or ethnic group (Cederberg, 2012; Erel, 2010). By limiting her study to only European students from middle to upper class families, Murphy-Lejeune identifies forms of social or cultural capital that are mainly accessible to wealthy White students. For example, more affluent students are more likely to have prior experience abroad due to the ability of their families to afford international travel. However, not all international students come from families with the financial means for international travel. Many international students rely on loans or pooling the savings of their extended family in order to afford the cost of studying in the United States (Redden, 2014, May 28). As such, Murphy-Lejeune's sample cannot be construed as being representative of the entire international student population studying in the United States. Consequently, not all international students are able to draw from mobility capital to aid them in navigating U.S. systems of higher education.

Because of these limitations, attention will be given to seeking to understand how the availability of mobility capital to aid international students varies based on students' socioeconomic statuses or ethnic backgrounds. Further, efforts will be taken to explore different forms of mobility capital that may be available to non-European or lower socioeconomic status groups that were not originally captured by Murphy-Lejeune's study to more adequately understand how social and cultural capital stemming from international students' backgrounds may be able to assist them in navigating U.S. institutions of higher education.

Transnational social field

Although not every international student has access to mobility capital, this does not mean that they are not able to rely on forms of support that long-term migrants use to navigate their time living in the United States. Contemporary research on the experiences of migrants has moved beyond understanding migration as a one-time event where migrants close their connections to their country of origin and begin to create a new life within their receiving country. Instead, contemporary literature on migrants views them as existing within transnational social fields that extend beyond the borders of countries (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Schiller & Levitt, 2006; Waldinger, 2015). Migrants' identity and goals are not restricted to the geographic borders of the country within which they reside, but instead transcend beyond place. A "new kind of migrating population is emerging, composed of those whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies. Their lives cut across national boundaries and bring two societies into a single social field" (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992, p. 1).

This has been made possible due to the rapid effects of globalization. Technological advancements in communication (e.g., international phone calls, video calls, email, etc.),

improved international travel (e.g., decreased cost in international flights), and the ease of moving money across borders (e.g., wire transfers, international treaties allowing the free flow of money across international borders, etc.) have all resulted in greater connectedness despite vast distance between migrants sending and receiving countries (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). This has allowed migrants to continue to not only be connected to family and friends back home, but to also be able to maintain an identity that is associated with their place of origin and not necessarily that of their receiving country (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Schiller & Levitt, 2006; Waldinger, 2015). Migrants often do not seek to assimilate to the cultural norms of their receiving country, but instead continue to adhere to the cultural norms of their sending country since they are able to remain connected to this culture through modern technology. The nexus of their identity ceases to be confined to the border of a specific country, but instead transcend across borders.

Transnational social networks not only allow migrants to remain connected to their family, friends, and the culture in their sending country, but also allow them to be connected to and supported by the government of their sending country. Both migrants and the government of their sending country are able to benefit from a transnational relationship between these two groups. Migrants often benefit from their home countries allowing them to maintain dual citizenship, setting up voting centers at embassies and consulates to allow migrants to vote in elections while living abroad, courting migrants for political and financial support, as well as aid migrants in adjusting to life in their new country (e.g., culture and language classes, documents services needed to apply for citizenship or benefits, etc.) (Fitzgerald, 2008; Lopez, 2015; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). Such efforts by sending governments further establish a transnational social network that helps to support migrants even after they have left their country of

citizenship. The government of a sending country is able to directly benefit from their transnational relationship with those who emigrated through nurturing migrants' positive views of their sending state, thus making it easier for homeland governments to request aid of their diaspora population at a later date. For example, Mexico's 3 x 1 program works with Mexican hometown associations in the United States to pool migrants' economic remittances and channel funds toward political and civic projects in Mexico that serve the interests of the Mexican government (Lopez, 2015).

Although international students are not necessarily permanent migrants, understanding the experience of international students in the context of their transnational social field is still necessary due to their multifaceted identities:

Unlike students who study abroad for a semester or pursue short-term specialized educational sojourns, undergraduate degree-seeking students are grounded in multiple social spaces for substantial periods of time, traveling to and from contexts of origin and campuses abroad over a period of several years (Gargano, 2009, p. 336).

Being grounded in multiple social spaces results in international students' identity and values being affected by experiences in both their receiving country and their sending country.

International students further have available to them support system that are not constrained to the borders of the country in which they reside.

This is made evident by some international students having been direct recipients of support from governmental and quasigovernmental organizations during their time as students. For example, the state owned Saudi Arabian Oil Company (colloquially known as Aramco) provides Saudi students studying in a foreign country with financial support to cover the cost of their tuition and living expenses (Saudi Arabian Oil Company, 2017). State support of

international students' education in a foreign country is not limited to only financial assistance, but also includes academic and cultural support. Saudi Arabian Oil Company offers a 10-month college preparatory program to aid students in their transition to a foreign college or university as well as their own college counselors—separate from counselors who work for their institution of higher education—to aid them in navigating their foreign college or university (Saudi Arabian Oil Company, 2017). Similarly, the Brazil Scientific Mobility Program provided students from Brazil studying in foreign countries financial support for their studies as well as assistance in obtaining an internship in their receiving country post-graduation (Institute of International Education, 2017c). This provided Brazilian students not only the financial support to obtain a tertiary education, but also assistance in moving into the work force.

Context of reception

While the migrant experience is no longer contained solely within the confines of individual countries, this does not mean that factors within the borders of a receiving country have no effect on a migrant's life. A multitude of factors in a receiving country alter migrants' decisions to relocate—whether temporarily or permanently—and the life that they have in their receiving country (Portes & Borocz, 1989). For example, international students have different educational experiences depending on the number of international students on their campus (Korobova, 2012) or the receptiveness of the native population (Hanassab, 2009; Lee & Rice, 2007; Sherry, Thomas, Chui, 2009). These factors are what Portes and Borocz (1989) conceptualized as context of reception. Context of reception can most succinctly be understood as follows:

The stance of host governments..., employers, the surrounding native population and the characteristics of the pre-existing ethnic community, if any, are important aspects of the

situation confronting new immigrants. Newcomers face these realities as *fait accompli* which alters their aspirations and plans and can channel individuals of similar backgrounds into widely different directions. (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p. 618)

Immigrants encountering an advantaged context of reception in their receiving country (i.e., a context that is supportive of the needs of migrants through either institutional policies or through the presence of previous generations of migrants who can help guide new immigrants) are given an opportunity to be incorporated into the primary labor market and achieve upward mobility within both the private and civic sectors (Portes & Borocz, 1989). Immigrants from different nationalities or ethnic groups (e.g., Indian vs. Irish) experience different contexts of reception based on how previous generations of migrants (both previous generations of co-national migrants and co-ethnic migrants), the general populace, business community, and government in the receiving country view and treat these specific migrant populations. Thus, migrants from different ethnic groups living in the same city in a receiving country may encounter completely different contexts of reception, resulting in different outcomes for members of these different ethnic groups.

For international students, the context of reception at their postsecondary institution is arguably one of the most important factors that will influence their aspirations and ability to succeed both academically and professionally in the United States. A campus climate that is negative or antagonistic toward international students (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005; Hanassab, 2006; Lee, 2010; Zhai, 2002), faculty and staff perceptions of international students (Kher, Juneau, & Molstad, 2003; Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Rhee & Sagaria, 2004; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000), and presence of other international students (Korobova, 2012; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005) all contribute to environments that can aid or hinder international students

ability to succeed academically and socially. For international students, it is not enough to consider the context of reception that is contained within just their institution of higher education. The city, county, state, and even geographic region of the United States will all alter the context of reception that is available to either aid or harm an international student's time as a student.

Synthesis of three frameworks

Together, mobility capital, transnational social fields, and context of reception provide a means to conceptualize the international student experience. Mobility capital affords a broader understanding of biographical and family features that international students bring with them beyond the standard features that are typically utilized to understand the backgrounds of U.S. and international students (e.g., a focus on just socioeconomic status, English proficiency, parental education level, etc.). Inserting transnational social fields as an analytical idea further allows for an understanding of international students not as one-time migrants or as individuals who abandon their cultural identity, but instead as individuals whose identity and social networks transcends national borders. This allows for a fuller understanding of potential support to international students stemming from those in their sending country, whether this is family, friends, or government. Finally, context of reception offers an understanding of how international students encounter different environments at their institution of higher education, the city surrounding their school, and the geographic region where their school resides. These contexts of reception can contain co-ethnic migrants, co-national migrants, or migrant support groups (e.g., religious organizations, non-profit migrant advocacy groups, etc.) each of which has the potential to aid international students in their adaptation to life in the United States and at their institution of higher education. Conversely, context of reception could include a lack of

migrants or migrant support groups or a native population with anti-migrant sentiments.

Together, these three theories offer a means to understand international students, their support network throughout the world, and the available support to them in the immediate vicinity of their institution of higher education.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Further research on the experiences of international students studying in the United States is necessary to more fully understand how international students utilize forms of capital and their transnational networks to navigate the U.S. higher education system to achieve their educational goals. Previous research on the experiences of international students has either restricted forms of support for this student population to the confines of their college or university or has viewed the culture and backgrounds of international students as a hindrance to their education that institutions need to aid them in overcoming (Bodycott, 2012; Campbell, 2012; Shafaei, Nejati, Quazi, & Von der Heidt, 2016; Tatar, 2005). Through utilizing a qualitative approach, this study sought to move beyond such a limited view of the international student experience in order to understand how international students in the U.S. utilize forms of capital and transnational networks to navigate the U.S. higher education system to achieve their educational goals. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What prior experiences have cultivated forms of capital in undergraduate international students that enable them to be successful academically and socially while studying at a U.S. institution of higher education?
2. What networks are undergraduate international students able to draw support from to aid them in navigating their U.S. institution of higher education?

Qualitative Approach

The ability of qualitative inquiry to examine how individuals and groups understand and make meaning of the world around them (Creswell, 2007) made this method of inquiry most suited to determine how international students themselves make meaning of their status as international students. Further, such a form of inquiry allowed for an exploration of the forms of

social or cultural capital stemming from international students' backgrounds beyond those that are primarily the domain of economically and socially elite individuals as found in Murphy-Leujune's (2002) conceptualization of mobility capital. This afforded a fuller conceptualization of how international students are able to draw from their unique backgrounds to be successful during their studies in the U.S.

Study Site

This study was conducted at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), a large research university located in Los Angeles. UCLA was an optimal site for this study for three primary reasons. First, UCLA perennially has one of the largest populations of international students of any institution of higher education in the U.S. (Institute of International Education. 2019a), which made it likely that a large pool of participants would be able to be recruited that was comprised of individuals with varying backgrounds and experiences. Through recruiting a diverse group of potential participants, a final selection of interviewees was able to be identified who have a variety of backgrounds (e.g., variation of participants' major, ethnicity, gender, etc.) thus allowing for a fuller comprehension of the international student experience. As of the start of the 2017/18 academic year, UCLA had 12,199 international students who were either enrolled as students or who recently graduated and were working in the U.S. through Optional Practical Training (OPT), a post-graduation benefit of their F-1 student visas (Institute of International Education. 2019a). This made UCLA the seventh largest enroller of international students of any college or university in the U.S. (Institute of International Education. 2019a).

The second factor that made UCLA an ideal study site is its location in Los Angeles, a city that contains numerous migrants, international students, and foreign consulates resulting in a robust transnational social field existing in the region that could potentially support international

students at UCLA. Seven out of the top ten schools with the largest enrollment of international students are in major metro areas that contain a large migrant population and numerous postsecondary institutions of education that enroll international students (e.g., New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Boston) (Institute of International Education. 2019a). While sizable international student populations exist at institutions outside of major metro areas that do not have a large foreign born population (e.g., Michigan State University located in East Lansing, Michigan) a large proportion of the international student population in the U.S. are currently studying at colleges and universities located in global cities. Los Angeles is a diverse city with a large migrant population that is comprised of recent migrants as well as second and third generation migrants who have opted to permanently settle in Southern California (United States Census Bureau, 2017). This large migrant population ensures that other migrants live and work throughout the region who potentially could provide support—whether academically, culturally, or professionally—to international students at UCLA. For example, the San Gabriel Valley which is just East of the city of Los Angeles has a larger number of Asian residents than 42 other states in the U.S. (cite, date). This large Asian population includes 266,701 Chinese (People’s Republic of China) foreign born residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), making Chinese residents one of the largest ethnic groups in the area. This dense concentration of foreign-born and Asian individuals results in the San Gabriel Valley containing over 81,654 Asian-American owned businesses as well as numerous Asian houses of worship and cultural institutions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Similar migrant communities exist throughout the City of Los Angeles and the greater Los Angeles County, affording opportunities for international students to access parts of their sending country’s culture while living abroad or to seek assistance from co-nationals who have

recently migrated to the United States and encountered similar issues adjusting to life in a foreign country. Through UCLA being a short distance away from ethnic enclaves that contain recent migrants, like the San Gabriel Valley, this university was an optimal site to conduct a study on how international students are able to utilize their transnational social field to aid them in navigating their institution of higher education.

Los Angeles County is further home to numerous other colleges and universities that have large international student populations of their own. This large number of international students within the county increases the opportunities for international students at UCLA to utilize a transnational network that extends beyond the confines of their campus. For example, the University of Southern California, which is located approximately 13 miles away from UCLA's campus, has 14,327 international students who are either enrolled as students or who recently graduated and are working in the United States via OPT (Institute of International Education. 2019a). Similarly, Santa Monica Community College, which is less than 6 miles from UCLA's campus, has an international student population of 3,532 students (Institute of International Education. 2019a). Numerous other colleges and universities throughout Los Angeles County have sizeable international student populations, resulting in a large number of international students in the region living in close proximity to one another. Such a dense concentration of international students near UCLA's campus provides an opportunity for this school's international students to be able to look to a transnational network that is not only comprised of recent permanent migrants, but is also comprised of international students from nearby colleges and universities who share similar experiences studying in a foreign country.

Los Angeles County is additionally home to 103 active foreign consulates, including those for China, South Korea, Canada, and Saudi Arabia (Chief Executive Office Los Angeles

County, 2017). The state of California is further home to 13 additional foreign consulates—all located in the San Francisco Bay Area in the northern part of the state—that have jurisdiction over Los Angeles County (Chief Executive Office Los Angeles County, 2017). These additional foreign consulates include India, Vietnam, and Singapore, each of which has sizeable international student populations in the U.S. Consulates often act as support systems for recent migrants through providing an array of services such as reproduction of official documents for its overseas citizens or hosting various acculturation programs (Fitzgerald, 2008; Lopez, 2015; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). The close geographic proximity of UCLA’s campus to numerous foreign consulates made it likely that international students on this campus would be able to utilize support stemming from the government of their sending country. This again made UCLA an ideal study site for examining how international students do or do not find support for their studies through their transnational networks, including support from the government of their sending country.

The third and final reason that UCLA is an optimal site for this study is due to convenience. Since I worked in UCLA’s international student office when this study was conducted and am currently a graduate student there, I had greater access to this student population than I would have at other colleges or universities. This resulted in fewer barriers to identifying study participants, simplified the process to conduct interviews, and made it easier to obtain data on specific support programs available to international students.

Participants

Participants recruited for this study had to be current junior or senior undergraduate international students at UCLA studying on F-1 student visas. Student participants additionally had to currently hold citizenship in China (PRC) or India. Students who held multiple

citizenships were not excluded from this study (e.g., a student who is both a citizen of India and Canada), as this is a common source of mobility capital (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). To increase the diversity of participants' backgrounds and experiences, efforts were taken to recruit a roughly equal number of participants from each country across genders, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and from a variety of majors.

Students from China and India were chosen for inclusion in this study for three primary reasons. First, these countries are the two largest senders of international students to the U.S., allowing for results from this study to be more applicable to students studying at institutions beyond UCLA. These two student groups are further the two largest segments of international students on UCLA's campus (Institute of International Education, 2019a), increasing the likelihood that a sufficient number of participants with a diversity of background characteristics could be recruited. Second, there exists large numbers of migrants and descendants of recent migrants in Los Angeles that originated from these two countries (United States Census Bureau, 2017), creating the potential for international students to rely on transnational networks beyond the borders of their campus. Finally, international students from these two countries are not likely to decrease in numbers in the near future. Migrants from these two countries are not currently being targeted by the Executive Branch of the U.S. government, making it less likely that international student enrollments from these two countries will be significantly suppressed in the near future. Additionally, due to limited access to elite systems of higher education in these two countries (Hayhoe, 1996; Jayaram, 2004; Lin & Liu, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), international students originating from China and India are likely to continue to apply to and matriculate at U.S. colleges and universities for the foreseeable future as a means to gain access to quality higher education institutions.

Sampling strategy

Participants who at the time of this study were junior or senior UCLA international students studying on F-1 student visas were recruited via purposeful and snowball sampling. Purposeful sampling ensured that participants recruited not only met this study's criteria of citizenship status but also ensured that they represented an array of different majors, genders, and ethnicities that are each associated with divergent lived experiences (Patton, 2002). International students studying at UCLA using F-1 visas who have entered the U.S. using a passport from China or India were recruited via an announcement in a weekly newsletter that was emailed to UCLA international students by the Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars (DCISS). Having DCISS contact students helped to recruit a diverse pool of participants since students from minority ethnic groups may choose to interact with DCISS and not interact with country specific international student groups since the latter tend to be dominated by students from the ethnic majority of their country while the former is comprised of students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Official UCLA student groups, specifically for either Chinese or Indian international students, were also contacted and asked to send the recruitment flier to their participants. This helped to recruit international students who may choose to not interact with DCISS but do still interact with students from their country of citizenship. Academic advisors from departments with at least 20 international students majoring in one of their fields (e.g., Economics, Engineering, Psychology, and Communications) were also contacted to request that they send via their listserv the recruitment flier for this study. Having academic advisors from a variety of departments reach out to potential participants ensured that international students from numerous different majors were invited to participate in this study. Finally, additional international students were identified via snowball sampling (Merriam, 2009) by asking for

referrals for additional study participants from DCISS staff members, academic advisors, international student groups, and international students who had signed up to participate in the study to notify their friends or colleagues who met the criteria to be included.

Recruitment materials included a link that students could use to register their interest in participating in the study. This link took potential participants to a brief online survey used to make sure participants met the study criteria and to screen for general background characteristics (e.g., countries of citizenship, majors, gender, parental education level, source of funding for studies, ethnicity, etc.) to ensure participants were selected with a variety of backgrounds.

In total, 35 individuals responded to recruitment efforts. Of these, 28 met all of the criteria to be included in this study and were contacted to schedule a time to be interviewed. Of these students, 21 students scheduled and completed an in-person interview. Eleven students held only Chinese citizenship, nine held only Indian citizenship, and one student was a citizen of both India and the Netherlands. A table containing the complete demographic information of participants can be found in Table 1.

Data Collection Procedures

Document analysis

Data collection began with document analysis of websites for groups and organizations that offer support and guidance to UCLA international students. These included websites for official UCLA international student groups, websites of unofficial UCLA international student groups, and the embassies and consulates representing China and India in the U.S. Google translate was used to translate any websites or related documents not written in English. Data obtained from this analysis was used to gain an initial sense of the context of reception international students at UCLA find themselves in as well as the various ways their transnational

social network may be able to aid international students in their studies. Initial findings from document analysis were used to alter or add interview questions posed to participants in order to gain a deeper comprehension of how international students view or utilize the forms of support available to them. Further, initial findings from document analysis were used to aid in the identification of additional international student groups to reach out to when recruiting participants.

Interviews

I sought to complete 20 in-person interviews with junior or senior international students studying at UCLA on F-1 student visas, with the goal of interviewing 10 students each from China and India. Ultimately, 21 students were interviewed for this study. Of these interviewees, 12 were citizens of China and nine were citizens of India. Partial biographies of participants are provided in the following chapter. Interviews with students were posed using Seidman's (2013[2019]) three part interview series. Interviews with students were scheduled for 60-90 minutes and were conducted in-person in a private setting on UCLA's campus at the Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars. Actual interviews lasted between 70 and 90 minutes in length depending on the succinctness of participants responses. Because all F-1 students must have a minimum English language competency in order to be admitted to UCLA, there was no need to have a translator assist during interviews. While Seidman (2013[2019]) recommends that the three part interview series be conducted via three separate interviews occurring at different points in time, this was not feasible due to there being only one researcher working on this project. Instead, the three part interview series was condensed into one interview that split each of the three parts into approximately 20-30 minute long segments.

Interviews with students began with questions focused on the life history of participants. This placed the “participant’s experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time” (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). This allowed for an exploration of past life experiences that may have developed within participants novel forms of mobility capital as well as additional forms of social or cultural capital that may have assisted this student population in their studies. In the second phase, questions were posed that delved into the details of participants’ experiences (Seidman, 2013), focusing on questions pertaining to the current experience international students were having as well as how they may be similar to permanent migrants. This phase of interview questions began with low-structured questions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) that enabled participants to provide information about how they believed they received support in navigating their institution of higher education. It then moved into highly structured questions pertaining specifically to forms of mobility capital or transnational networks that students utilized to support them in their studies. In the third and final phase, questions were posed to participants that required them to reflect on their experiences living and studying in the U.S. and what these experiences meant to them.

All interviews were audio recorded with permission of participants with the goal of transcribing each interview the same day it was conducted. Transcripts were ultimately transcribed within two weeks of the interview being conducted. During interviews, I kept a written record of emerging themes as well as any key phrases that could be useful later in the coding process (e.g., participant statements that could potentially serve as *in vivo* codes due to these statements encapsulating a sentiment common to most participants). At the conclusion of each interview, I wrote analytic memos in a journal regarding comments from the interview that

pertain to international students' use of mobility capital or their migrant network as well as any impressions of the interview that were relevant to this study's two research questions. I used these analytic memos to help me identify potential themes to investigate during the coding process as well as to try to identify any differences in student experiences based on their different life experiences.

Data Analysis

Data analysis first began with coding of documents collected from websites of international student support groups as well as websites of foreign embassies and consulates. Document analysis was conducted using the same three part coding process used to code participant interviews. Once interviews had been collected, audio recordings were transcribed for later analysis and analytic memos were written. Data from interviews were analyzed on an ongoing basis so that coding of data took place as close to when data was collected. All data—whether documents or interviews—were analyzed first via inductive and then using deductive coding methods. A running code list was kept and continuously updated as each piece of data was coded.

A first round of inductive coding that utilized open coding was used to identify categories contained within either documents or interviews that may be beyond the scope of this study's theoretical framework (Saldaña, 2013). Open coding was ideally suited for this study as it attempts to take as neutral of an approach to data as possible by letting the lived experiences and words of participants themselves be the basis of initial codes. (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Saldaña, 2013). For example, the *in vivo* code “sandwiched identity” was developed during the open coding process. This code captured the common participant experience of having an identity that is sandwiched between the culture of the country where they were born and the

culture of the various other parts of the world in which they lived. This code went beyond the codes stemming from the conceptual framework of this study, thus allowing for the experiences of students to provide a basis for codes and themes used to make sense of the data collected. Open coding further provided an analysis of data that was capable of creating unique codes for systems of support available to international students, whether they were a novel form of mobility capital or a unique aspect of their transnational networks that had not been captured by previous research on migrants.

After a data source had been analyzed using open coding, a second round of analysis was done using deductive coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) with codes derived from this study's theoretical framework. These deductive codes were used to create an initial understanding of how international students derive support from pre-existing notions of mobility capital or their transnational social fields as well as how their context of reception altered these forms of support. For example, the code "first experience with adaptation" came out of the theoretical framework and was used to organize the different instances of participants' first time adapting to a new environment. Additional codes stemmed out of this code pertaining to where participants' first experience with adaptation occurred (e.g., within their country of citizenship vs. abroad) as well as whether the experience was positive or negative.

After all data had been collected and analyzed using both open and deductive coding, a final round of coding using an axial approach was employed to reassess all data that had been collected. Axial coding was ideal for this study as it strives to make sense of data that has been collected through a variety of methods (i.e., document analysis and interviews) (Saldaña, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This final step of coding was taken in order to "...strategically reassemble data that were "split" or "fractured" during the Initial Coding process" (Saldaña,

2013, p. 159) and to begin to make connections between the various codes and themes that have been previously identified.

Once coding had been completed, emerging categories of codes were identified and compared with each other to make sense of the data (Saldaña, 2013). These categories were then used to identify larger themes that eventually were used to create an overarching theory to answer this study's two research questions.

Positionality

While efforts were taken to reduce the influence of my background, key factors were relevant. I am a White, male, graduate student at UCLA who has never studied outside of the United States where I am a citizen by birth. While my background is not that of an international student, at the time this study was conducted I was working full-time as a Designated School Official (DSO) in UCLA's Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars, resulting in me having daily contact with international students at UCLA. In this position I was responsible for advising F-1 students at UCLA to aid them in navigating issues stemming from their non-immigrant visa status as well as to help them adjust academically and socially to life in the United States. My role as a DSO gave me direct experience with international students studying at UCLA and the various needs of this student population. This helped to inform me during the creation of the interview protocol and during the interview process. For example, my prior experience allowed me to understand systemic barriers to participants' obtaining off-campus employment due to the employment restrictions of their F-1 student visas.

This position required prior authorization from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, as I was responsible for creating non-immigrant documents needed to apply for U.S. student visas as well as granting students benefits of their F-1 student visas. I further was

responsible for ensuring that the university and its students were in compliance with federal regulations pertaining to non-immigrant visa categories, which often required that I must deny international students on F-1 visas from being granted work authorization that falls outside of the limits of their visa category (e.g., internships that cannot be considered directly related to a student's major and degree level).

In my role as a DSO, I was not responsible for advising any one specific segment of the F-1 student population (e.g., students from a specific country or students whose last names fall into a specific range of letters). There were three other DSOs within the Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars, each of whom was capable of meeting with any F-1 student who needed assistance in navigating their non-immigrant status. This enabled any student who wished to participate in this study to not have to meet with me in my capacity as a DSO if doing so would make them feel uncomfortable. While no student notified DCISS that they would prefer to meet with other DSOs, a few participants chose to specifically meet with me for counseling about their F-1 status at some point after the study.

Throughout the process of designing this study, collecting data, and analyzing data I engaged in reflection on how my experience as a U.S. citizen working with international students may influence or bias me. This entailed keeping a journal where I wrote reflexively on my interactions with my participants during the interview and coding process as a means to be cognizant of my own subjectivity (Olson, 2011). Reflexive journaling helped me to remain aware of how my prior work with international students or my own life experiences may be altering the way in which I understood what my participants were conveying to me. As complete neutrality is impossible to achieve, the below additional efforts were utilized to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of data collection and analysis.

Validity

A variety of efforts were utilized to establish the trustworthiness of the findings from this study. First, credibility of findings were established through the use of multiple data collection procedures enabling triangulation of data. Triangulation entails employing numerous data collection methods, each of which are aimed at answering a research question, and then analyzing findings from these variety of data collection methods to see if there exists a convergence in findings (Greene, 2007; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Data collected through document analysis and interviews with international students provided a variety of data sources which were analyzed with the intent of finding not only a coherence of results but also any potentially divergent data points.

Second, the trustworthiness of findings from this study were established through the recruitment of a large number of international student participants with divergent biographical characteristics and majors. Through interviewing a large and diverse group of international students, a saturation of findings was obtained. Further, a diverse participant pool allowed for results to not be applicable to just one specific type of international students (e.g., only students from one specific major), but to be representative of ULCA international students in general that originate from the two countries included in this study.

Validity of findings was further established through the use of member checking throughout the data collection process. Member checking is the process of obtaining participant validation of transcripts and conclusions drawn from data analysis to verify that results are accurate representations of these participants' experiences (Bazeley, 2013). Member checking occurred at two different stages. First, after each interview had been transcribed I emailed a copy of the transcript and audio recording to the participant to enable them to correct any

mistranscription as well as give further clarification on their responses. Second, once all data had been collected and analyzed, a summary of findings was given to participants for review, giving participants the chance to offer feedback or clarification on the relevance of findings to their personal experiences. Participants did not provide feedback on either the content of the transcripts or the findings despite being offered the opportunity. While this could be for any number of reasons, it is probable that participants did not provide feedback on findings since these were not compiled until after many participants had graduated from UCLA and moved on to either working or pursuing a graduate degree.

Limitations

Despite efforts being taken to strengthen the validity of this study, there still exist potential limitations to findings able to be drawn from data collected. First, this study is limited due to it being conducted entirely at one university that is contained in a global city. The characteristics of this institution and its location are unique to it, making findings not necessarily applicable to all institutions of higher education. While findings may be generalizable to other U.S. colleges or universities in large metropolitan areas (e.g., institutions of higher education in New York, Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, etc.), they likely cannot be applied to all postsecondary schools. For example, a community college in a rural location will likely produce experiences for international students that are different from those experienced by students at UCLA.

Second, this study is limited to only examining the experiences of Chinese and Indian undergraduate students who are currently juniors or seniors. Consequently, findings may not be applicable to non-Asian students who may have different contexts of reception in the United States or weaker transnational networks. For example, students from Iraq may experience a more

hostile context of reception due to Islamophobic attitudes of segments of the U.S. population or due to the lack of a transnational support network given the relatively lower number of Iraqi migrants living in the United States. Participants being limited to undergraduate students could further result in findings of this study not being applicable to the experiences of graduate international students who have their own unique needs and background experiences.

Finally, due to my working as a DSO in UCLA's international student office, some participants may be reticent to report activities that they perceive as being illegal or a violation of their F-1 visa status. Participants were notified before interviews that their responses were anonymous and that I would not report any responses given by participants that do not pose physical or mental harm to themselves or others. Despite these efforts, there still existed the possibility that participants were reticent to disclose activities they believe are illegal or unethical.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

The following provides a brief biography of each of the 21 participants in this study, focusing on their nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and key life experiences from before their arrival to UCLA. While a few participants in this study came from lower to middle socioeconomic statuses, the majority of students from both India and China came from higher socioeconomic statuses. Similarly, only a few students in this study did not identify with the ethnic majority of their country of citizenship. As previously indicated, the names of participants are all pseudonyms. Biographies of students are presented in the order that they were interviewed.

Li

Li is a female from China who identifies her ethnicity as Asian. She is one of the few students in this study who did not come from an upper socioeconomic status. While her mother did not graduate from high school, her tuition was paid for through her parents' savings. At the time of the study, she was a senior transfer student at UCLA. Prior to arriving at UCLA, she attended Santa Monica Community College, which is a few miles East of UCLA.

Li grew up in China just south of Shanghai in a city of approximately three million people. Her parents both grew up in Wenzhou where most of her mother's family currently lives. Her father travels internationally for work at least once a year. These trips take him primarily to the U.S. or Europe. He was the one who recommended that Li look into earning a degree in the U.S. rather than in China. In her youth she attended public school where the language of instruction was Mandarin. Mandatory English classes at her school started in the fourth grade.

Li described her first time interacting with a culture that was different than her own as being when she travelled to Shanghai as a child for about a month to participate in SAT and TOEFOL preparation courses. Growing up she did not have experiences traveling internationally. Her first international experience was attending Santa Monica Community College (SMCC) as an F-1 student for her first two years of her studies. While at SMCC she participated in a program designed to foster interactions between Chinese international students and the local Chinese migrant community. However, the local Chinese migrant community that participated in this program was comprised of mainly Cantonese speakers who had a culture that was not similar to hers. Because of this cultural difference, she was not able to easily connect with this migrant community. Li has an older cousin who studied computer science at a school in Northern California. Both have visited each other since she arrived in the U.S. Prior to attending either SMCC or UCLA, she briefly spoke with her cousin to gain advice about life in the U.S.

Zhi

Zhi is a female student from China who ethnically identifies as Han, the majority ethnic group in China. She comes from a middle to upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree her mother earned was a Master's degree. She paid for her tuition at UCLA using her parents' savings. At the time of the study she was a senior at UCLA.

Zhi grew up in what she referred to as a "relatively small city" outside of Beijing that she believes had a population around 100,000. Her mother is a professor and her father is a civil engineer. When she was young, her father's work required him to frequently travel throughout China. Simultaneously, her mother was pursuing her Master's degree. Because of work and school commitments of both of her parents, she was partially raised by her grandparents.

Starting in lower secondary school, Zhi attended a boarding school for a few years and only came home on the weekends. The boarding school used Mandarin as its language of instruction, but was what she described as an “English focused school” that had numerous smaller English classes led by instructors from the U.S. Additionally, her lower secondary school orchestrated educational abroad trips for its students which allowed her to come to the U.S. for a language intensive study at a U.S. university.

Zhi’s mother and her had been planning for her to earn her degree abroad since she was in lower secondary school. To help prepare her for university level study in the U.S., her family worked with an agent to help her enroll in the final two years of upper secondary school in a school in Philadelphia, PA. While in Philadelphia she stayed with a few different U.S. host families and gained exposure to life in the U.S. as well as the U.S. style of education.

Saanvi

Saanvi is a female student from India who ethnically identifies as Indian. She grew up in New Delhi, a global city that is the capitol of India. She comes from a middle to upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree earned by her mother is a Master’s degree. She paid for her UCLA tuition using her parents’ savings. Both her mother and her father are lawyers. At the time of the study, she was a junior at UCLA.

Starting in the first grade, Saanvi attended a boarding school for about 10 years. Her father, her uncles, and her grandfather all attended the same boarding school. Due to all of her family attending this school, the idea of attending a boarding school was normalized for Saanvi. The school used English as its language of instruction. It enrolled students from throughout India as well as from throughout the world. This resulted in her coming into contact with students from throughout India and the world during her secondary education. Additionally, Saanvi had

numerous international experiences throughout her childhood that allowed her to interact with individuals from different cultures. Her and her family vacationed to a few European countries during her youth and also travelled to Singapore.

Yu

Yu is a female student from China who ethnically identifies as Han. She comes from a middle to upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree earned by her mother is a Master's degree. She paid for her UCLA tuition using her parents' savings. At the time of the study she was a senior transfer student at UCLA. Prior to studying at UCLA, she spent two years at UC Davis. She opted to transfer from UC Davis to UCLA due to the higher ranking of UCLA.

Yu was born and raised in Beijing, the sprawling capitol of China. Since her parents worked in a different part of Beijing from where she attended school, she was primarily raised by her grandparents, with her parents staying with them every weekend and weeknights whenever possible. She attended a secondary school that is associated with Renmin University in Beijing. According to her, the secondary school she attended is one of the better schools in Beijing. It had an optional international curriculum that was designed to help students gain entrance and be successful at universities outside of China. For the international curriculum, the language of instruction was an even mix of English and Mandarin. Teachers who taught in English typically came from Western countries. She engaged in minimal international tourism while growing up (e.g., visited nearby countries in Asia). However, she did attend a summer program at Stanford University when she was in upper secondary school. This briefly exposed her to the U.S. and its academic norms.

Yu has an aunt and uncle who live in the Bay Area. They have provided her with advice on life in the U.S. and were able to provide her support during her first two years studying in the

U.S. given their proximity to UC Davis. They further helped her with her physical move from UC Davis to UCLA.

Hui

Hui is a female international student from China who ethnically identifies as Han. She comes from a middle to upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree earned by her mother was a bachelor's degree. She paid her tuition using a combination of her parents' savings and a scholarship she earned from her upper secondary school. At the time of the study she was a senior at UCLA.

Hui spent the early part of her life in Guangdong Provenance in Mainland China and then relocated with her family to Macau, a special administrative region of China. The culture of Macau and the primary language spoken there differed from that of where she was born (Cantonese is primarily spoken in Macau compared to Mandarin in Mainland China). Her father and mother own a factory that manufactures clothing for export that is located outside of China. This resulted in her father needing to travel internationally for work throughout her youth. Growing up she travelled extensively throughout China as well as visited foreign countries like Japan and Greece.

The secondary school Hui attended in Macau used a Canadian curriculum and has English as its language of instruction. The majority of the teachers at the school were Canadian. Her parents enrolled her in this school with the intention of it preparing her to go abroad to earn a degree.

Aadya

Aadya is a female international student from India who identifies her ethnicity as Indo-Aryan. She comes from an upper socioeconomic status. Her mother's highest level of education

is a Bachelor's degree. She paid for her tuition using her parents' savings. At the time of this study she was a junior at UCLA.

Aadya grew up in New Delhi where she lived in a house with her parents, both sets of her grandparents, and one of her uncles. She attended what she described as a highly ranked private school in New Delhi where English was the language of instruction. She describes the student body as primarily coming from middle to upper class families. Through her school she participated in several cross-cultural trips within India. During one of these cross-cultural trips she traveled to a more rural part of India where many Tibetans live in exile, including the Dalai Lama who she was able to meet. Most students at her upper secondary school chose to earn a degree outside of India. Instead of rote memorization, her school extensively utilized group work and encouraged interaction between students and teachers.

Aadya's father is a travel agent, so they would get free tickets and vacation packages that allowed her to travel throughout Asia while she was growing up. She has relatives in New York, New Orleans, and Miami. Because of her numerous family members living in the U.S., she visited the U.S. several times as a child. While she has visited her relatives in the U.S., she believes many of them are more traditional than her family back in India. She attributes this to the fact that her family in the U.S. did not progress with the rest of India. Instead, her relatives in the U.S. kept the values that were in place in India at the time of their emigration.

Ying

Ying is a female student from China who ethnically identifies as Han. She comes from a middle to upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree earned by her mother is a Bachelor's degree. Her mother works as an accountant and her father has a manufacturing company that

makes parts used for managing shipping. They both earned degrees in China. She paid for her tuition at UCLA using her parents' savings. At the time of this study she was a junior at UCLA.

Ying was born in Shenzhen, a city bordering Hong Kong. According to her, most of the population in the city were not originally from Shenzhen, but instead relocated from other parts of China. She attended a private upper secondary school in China that offered international courses as well as Advanced Placement coursework. She took part in the international program at her secondary school along with about 35-38 other students. All of her classmates in the international program planned to earn a degree outside of China. Her courses were primarily taught in Mandarin with only a few courses being taught in English by foreign teachers.

While growing up Ying was able to travel with her family to Finland, Norway, the U.K., and Egypt. Her parents did not speak English, so on these trips she would often have to act as a translator to help with rudimentary communication with locals. When she was in lower secondary school she travelled to the U.S. through a program at her school that allowed her to visit UCLA, USC, Berkeley, and a few Ivy League schools.

Feng

Feng is a female student from China who ethnically identifies as Han. She comes from roughly a middle socioeconomic status. The highest education level of her mother was graduating from high school. Her father is a police officer and her mother is a nurse. She paid for her tuition at UCLA using her parents' savings. At the time of this study she was a junior at UCLA.

Feng grew up in Guangzhou, the third largest city in China. Guangzhou is further a major global city with a large foreign-born population. Both her parents grew up elsewhere in China and then relocated to Guangzhou for the purpose of work. Feng went to a lower secondary

school that she felt “there isn’t anything special about” but did attend an upper secondary school where she participated in the school’s international cohort. The language of instruction was a combination of Mandarin and English. It further offered Advanced Placement coursework.

Feng did not get to travel internationally with her family, but during upper secondary school she took part in summer programs through her school that allowed her to study at UC Berkeley and at UT Austin. These programs included a combination of courses on SAT test preparation, English language, U.S. culture, and Ancient Greek Philosophy.

Kiara

Kiara is a female international student from India who ethnically identifies as Indo-Aryan. She comes from a roughly upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree earned by her mother was a Bachelor’s degree. Her mother is a chemical engineer and her father works in credit risk at a bank. She paid for her tuition at UCLA using her parents’ savings. At the time of this study she was a junior at UCLA.

While Kiara was born in India, her family moved to Singapore when she was four for her parents work. The neighborhood in Singapore where they lived was primarily comprised of Indian ex-patriots, but also included families from other parts of the world. She attended a private school in Singapore that primarily enrolled Indian ex-patriots. The language of instruction at her school was English. During upper secondary school she attended a school geared towards preparing students to earn a degree in a Western nation. This school utilized the British International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) system up until grade 10 and for grades 11 and 12 used the Swiss International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Her school took her on cross-cultural trips to Thailand, China, and Cambodia.

Growing up Kiara travelled internationally frequently, travelling extensively throughout Asia, but also visiting the U.K. and Continental Europe where she has an Aunt living in Switzerland. Despite these frequent international excursions, her first time coming to the U.S. was when she arrived at UCLA for orientation.

Nian

Nian is a female international student from China who ethnically identifies as Han. She comes from a middle to upper socioeconomic status. Her mother's highest degree obtained was a Doctorate. She paid for her UCLA tuition through a combination of her parents' savings and a scholarship from UCLA. At the time of this study she was a junior at UCLA.

Nian was born and raised in Guangzhou. Her mother grew up in Guangzhou but her father was originally from Hunan and relocated to Guangzhou when he went to university. Her father is a hospital director and her mother has had several different careers originally working in real estate, then running a cosmetic company, and now operates an education abroad company that takes Chinese students to visit colleges in the U.S. where they participate in English language training programs. Her mother started this company when Nian was in lower secondary school. Because of her mother's company, Nian has travelled extensively to the U.S. and has visited numerous colleges and universities throughout the U.S. She has further travelled to Australia, the U.K., France, Austria, and Canada with her mother's education abroad company. Nian attended a regular primary and lower secondary school. In upper secondary she attended and international high school that used English as the language of instruction and had U.S. culture classes taught by teachers from the U.S.

Jing

Jing is a female student from China who ethnically identifies as Han. She comes from a middle to upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree obtained by her mother is a Bachelor's degree. She paid for her tuition at UCLA using her parents' savings. At the time of this study she was a senior at UCLA.

Jing grew up outside of Hong Kong where all of her extended family currently lives. She attended a regular public school for primary and lower secondary school. When she was 15, she enrolled in an upper secondary boarding school in New Zealand. She went to New Zealand on her own while her parents remained back in China, exposing her to life on her own at a relatively early age. Her school in New Zealand was an international school that was attended by students from throughout Oceania and Asia. The language of instruction was English with teachers primarily from Oceania. Almost all students at her school applied to colleges and universities throughout the world.

While growing up Jing visited more than 15 different countries including Uruguay, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and a few European countries. Her parents do not speak English, so she would have to do rudimentary communication on behalf of her family during these trips. She has a few older cousins who earned their degrees in the U.S.

An

An is a female international student from China who ethnically identifies as Mongolian, one of the many ethnic minorities from throughout China. She comes from a roughly middle socioeconomic status. Her mother's highest degree obtained was a Master's degree. She paid for her tuition at UCLA using her parents' savings. At the time of this study she was a junior at UCLA.

An grew up in Inner Mongolia but relocated with her family to Beijing at a very young age. Her family chose to move to Beijing since it was a more international city that provided more opportunities to expose An to different cultures and ideas. Moving to Beijing resulted in her being surrounded by people who are ethnically Han, the majority population of China. As a child this resulted in classmates saying ethnically prejudiced things to her. For example, she described the experience of her classmates teasing her by asking if she used to ride a horse to school.

An attended public school throughout her childhood. During her secondary education, the school she attended did not yet have an international track (although it recently introduced one). The language of instruction was Mandarin, but English was a required course. Her school did not offer Advanced Placement classes, so she opted to self-study for Advanced Placement tests.

An participated in her secondary school's orchestra, which provided her the opportunity to travel internationally for performances in the U.S., Australia, and Europe. Additionally, she did a study abroad program in Germany when she was 17. This program was one of several study abroad programs organized by her school. She has an aunt and uncle who live in Pasadena, a city just Northeast of UCLA.

Arjun

Arjun is a male international student from India who ethnically identifies as Indian. He comes from a roughly middle socioeconomic status. The highest degree earned by his mother was a Master's degree. Arjun was unique in this study as he paid for his tuition using both his parents' savings and student loans. Further, he works part-time to help cover some of his tuition and living expenses. At the time of this study Arjun was a junior at UCLA.

Arjun grew up in India in what he described as a small town. His parents were originally

from a different state in India that was culturally dissimilar to where he was born and raised. This occasionally meant that the cultural norms he was taught at home clashed with those he learned at school. For example, he explained that at school he was taught one does not wear shoes inside, versus at his home he was taught that this was an acceptable practice. Further, his school was vegetarian while at home his family ate meat. He attended a private school in India from grades one to twelve where English was the primary language of instruction. His school differed from those of many other students in this study, as it did not have any Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate courses, or an international curriculum. Despite this, many of his classmates still ended up attending universities in the U.S. (e.g., Georgia Tech, U.C. Santa Barbara, and UCLA). Arjun went to a private coaching school in addition to his regular school to take SAT preparation courses.

Arjun only prior international experience before coming to UCLA was visiting his aunt and cousins who live in London. He has several older cousins who attended universities in the U.S. and who currently are working in the U.S. They provided him with guidance on life in the U.S. before his arrival to UCLA.

Diya

Diya is a female international student from India who ethnically identifies as Indo-Aryan. She comes from a middle to upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree her mother earned was a Doctorate degree. Diya was unique in this study since she paid for her tuition at UCLA using a combination of her parents' savings and student loans. At the time of this study she was a junior at UCLA.

Diya was born in Southern India, but spent much of her formative years in Bangalore which she describes as "the most Americanized city in India". Her father is a bureaucrat in the

Indian Civil Service, which resulted in her family moving around India throughout her life due to her father's job. Consequently, she has lived in or visited most parts of India.

At the start of 3rd grade, Diya's father began a master's degree program at Princeton University, so her entire family relocated to the U.S. for two years. During this time she attended an elementary school near Princeton's campus. Her family then returned to India where she attended a private school. Although she attended a private school that had an international track, she opted to enroll in the regular curriculum that was focused on helping students do well on the boards needed to gain entrance to universities in India. The language of instruction at her secondary school was English.

Chen

Chen is a male international student from China who ethnically identifies as Han. He came from a lower to middle socioeconomic status. His parents did not have the chance to attend a traditional university and earned a living as grade school teachers for several years while they studied for the entrance exam to enroll in accounting master's degree programs. The highest degree his mother was eventually able to earn was a Master's degree. Chen paid for his UCLA tuition using his parents' savings. At the time of this study he was a senior at UCLA.

Chen grew up in Shenzhen where he attended a public school, but also took part in private tutoring for English. Due to his parents being grade school teachers throughout most of Chen's childhood, they did not have a great deal of money while he was growing up. However, they did prioritize his education making sure to set money aside for private tutoring. His parents eventually were able to earn their Master's degrees and now work as accountants, which provides them with a more comfortable living and the ability to help pay for Chen's tuition and living expenses at UCLA.

The public school Chen attended used Mandarin as the language of instruction, but did require English courses. He was able to take Advanced Placement classes through his school and also participated in a study abroad program in England through his school. This allowed him to be immersed in a culture that differed from his own during his teenage years.

Ananya

Ananya is a female international student from India who ethnically identifies as Indian. She comes from a roughly upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree her mother earned was a Master's degree. She paid for her tuition at UCLA using her parents' savings. At the time of this study she was a junior.

Ananya was born in New Delhi, but spent time living in Singapore, Indonesia, and the U.S. throughout her childhood. Her father works for a large oil company, which resulted in her family moving around frequently for his work. They moved to Singapore when she was in the sixth grade and moved to Indonesia when she was in the eighth grade. In tenth grade her family moved to Virginia where she eventually graduated from high school. Her schooling outside of the U.S. was all based on the International Baccalaureate program and used English as the language of instruction. In addition to relocating to various countries while growing up, her and her family also travelled throughout Asia during her childhood.

Ishan

Ishan is a male international student from India who ethnically identifies as Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. He comes from a roughly upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree his mother earned is a Master's degree. He paid for his tuition at UCLA using his parents' savings. At the time of this study he was a junior at UCLA.

Ishan was born in a small village in India where his grandparents lived. He grew up in

Calcutta where his father is a professor as well as in Pune where he and his mother relocated after his parents divorced. Additionally, his family briefly lived in Singapore when he was in the third and fourth grade. When asked where he is from, he responds with “Pune” since that is the city with which he most identifies. In describing Pune, he says it is a very “Westernized city”. He travelled throughout most of India while growing up.

Because of Ishan’s parents’ financial standing, he was able to attend very good schools throughout his childhood. In lower secondary school, he attended a regular Indian school in Pune. However, starting in eleventh grade he enrolled at a private international school that used the International Baccalaureate system and enrolled students from throughout Asia. All of the schools he attended used English as their language of instruction.

Daiyu

Daiyu is a female international student from China who ethnically identifies as Han. She comes from a roughly middle socioeconomic status. The highest degree earned by her mother was a Bachelor’s degree. Her father works in a factory while she described her mother as being “just a daily worker” in a company. She paid for her tuition at UCLA using her parents’ savings. At the time of this study she was a senior transfer student at UCLA.

Daiyu was born and raised in Beijing where her parents and her paternal grandparents raised her. Her father grew up in Beijing while her mother grew up elsewhere, but relocated to Beijing when she went to university. She attended a school that is associated with a university in Beijing throughout her secondary education. The school was internationally focused using English as its language of instruction and used textbooks from England for parts of its instruction. The school utilized the International Baccalaureate program. The school also organized cross-cultural trips that took its students throughout various parts of China during

school holidays. Additionally, she was able to participate in a brief study abroad trip through her school that took her to England to participate in an English language and culture program.

Daiyu's secondary school had a pathway program associated with East Los Angeles Community College (ELACC) that enabled graduates of her school to gain entrance to ELACC without having to take the SATs. She participated in this program and attended ELACC for two years. She then transferred to UCLA.

Prisha

Prisha is an international student from India who ethnically identifies as Indian. She comes from a roughly upper socioeconomic status. Her mother's highest degree earned was a Master's degree. She paid for her tuition at UCLA using her parents' savings. At the time of this study she was a junior at UCLA.

Prisha grew up as an only child in Mumbai. Because her grandparents lived far away and both of her parents had to work late hours, she also grew up with what she described as a "helper". Her parents did not grow up with money, but were able to improve their financial situation through delaying having children so that they could earn advanced degrees. Her father works in finance. Her mother was an accountant for most of her career until she eventually quit to stay at home with Prisha when Prisha started the eleventh grade.

Prisha began to yearly fly on her own to spend summers with her grandparents starting at the age of four. She attended boarding school for just one year in primary school, but due to the small class size of four people, her family pulled her from the school. She then attended an international school in Mumbai for the first two years of lower secondary school. Her family relocated to Singapore due to her parents work. She finished lower secondary school in Singapore at a school that used the U.K. education system. She travelled extensively while

growing up, visiting numerous Asian countries as well as traveling to the U.K. and continental Europe.

Wenling

Wenling is a female international student from China who ethnically identifies as Han. She comes from a roughly middle socioeconomic status. The highest degree that her mother earned was a Bachelor's degree. She paid for her tuition at UCLA using a combination of her parents' savings and savings from her extended family. At the time of this study she was a junior at UCLA.

Wenling grew up in Chongzuo, a Southern city in China that borders Vietnam and has a population of over seven million. Both her parents grew up in Chongzuo. Her mother works for the government as an administrator and her father works for a national electricity company in China. Her parents divorced when she was very young, so she is not close to her father. She went to a public school that had an international track and required all students to take English courses. To participate in the international track, she had to sign an agreement that she would not take the Gaokao (i.e., the Chinese university entrance exam). The international track provided her with counselors and faculty that were able to advise her on the application process to attend a university in the U.S. Her school further offered numerous Advanced Placement courses, of which she enrolled in eight. She participated in a summer school program at Duke University during upper secondary school. While at Duke she lived in the residence halls and took an economics class focused on game theory. This was her only trip to the U.S. prior to her arrival to UCLA.

Akshay

Akshay is a male student who has citizenship in both the Netherlands and India. He

ethnically identifies as Indian. He comes from an upper socioeconomic status. The highest degree his mother earned is a Master's degree. He paid for his tuition at UCLA using his parents' savings. At the time of this study he was a junior at UCLA.

Akshay was born in Paris, spent a few years living in London, but mostly lived in Amsterdam until the age of 12. His family then moved to New Delhi where the rest of his extended family lived. His father works in finance and his job is what drove his family to move throughout the world during Akshay's childhood. While in India, Akshay attended a secondary school that he described as being filled with kids from privileged backgrounds. The language of instruction was English and the curriculum was focused on the Central Board of Secondary Education, an Indian curriculum designed to prepare students for university in India. He additionally participated in private tutoring to prepare for the SATs.

Akshay considers himself to be very well travelled. Because he lived in Europe when he was younger, he was able to travel throughout much of the continent while growing up. He has two uncles who live on the East Coast in the U.S. and a cousin who is a professor at Stanford.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how international students in the United States utilize forms of capital and migrant networks to navigate the U.S. higher education system to achieve their educational goals. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What prior experiences have cultivated forms of capital in undergraduate international students that enable them to be successful academically and socially while studying at a U.S. institution of higher education?
2. What networks are undergraduate international students able to draw support from to aid them in navigating their U.S. institution of higher education?

The findings from this qualitative study comes from semi-structured interviews with 21 international students (12 Chinese and 9 Indian) who when interviewed held either junior or senior status at UCLA. Interviews lasted for 70-90 minutes and focused on relevant formative cross-cultural experiences that participants had before arriving at UCLA and how these experiences shaped their time studying in the U.S. Interviews further delved into how international students drew upon their prior experiences and the support networks available to them to be successful both academically and socially.

The following presentation of findings from these interviews is organized into two sections: First, an overview of the way in which participants were able to develop mobility capital prior to arriving at UCLA and how this was able to aid them while earning their degree. Second, an examination of the types of transnational networks that international students were able to draw from during their studies at UCLA in order to be successful academically and socially.

Findings Related to International Students' Mobility Capital Development

International students coming to the United States for postsecondary education do not come to their colleges or universities as blank slates but instead arrive at their campuses with a wealth of prior experiences that influence how they make sense of their time in the U.S. My data revealed that students developed mobility capital before arriving to UCLA through four avenues. First, mobility capital was developed through participants experiencing adaptation for the first time as a result of moving to culturally distinct parts of their country, traveling internationally, or as a result of growing up in global cities. Second, through prior experiences with mobility via tourism, moving abroad, or through international education trips students developed unique forms of mobility capital. International students in this study additionally identified personality features of a potential wanderer—i.e., one who is drawn to new and challenging cross-cultural experiences—as something that further developed in them mobility capital. Finally, a unique form of mobility capital was developed through participants having attended international schools or postsecondary schools with an international track.

First Experience with Adaptation

Both Chinese and Indian students in this study had prior experiences with adaptation before arriving at UCLA that prepared them to be able to adapt to life in a new country and to be able to navigate their time studying in the U.S. effectively. These first experiences with adaptation typically resulted from relocating with their family to a culturally distinct part of their own country of citizenship, travelling to another country for the first time, or by growing up in a global city.

Within a student's country of citizenship

Both Indian and Chinese students who participated in this study experienced moving within their country of citizenship from a region of their country with their first familiar culture to a region that was culturally distinct. Having moved within their country of citizenship exposed them to new cultures without them or their families ever leaving their national borders, which resulted in many students having their first experience with adaptation. For example, An, a female student from China, moved between two culturally distinct parts of China that resulted in her first experience with adaptation:

I was born in another province other than Beijing, though I went to Beijing at a really young age, so I basically lived there for most of the time. I was born in some other province you probably haven't heard of, Inner Mongolia.

After she relocated to Beijing, An was exposed to a different culture and was made to feel like somewhat of an outsider due to her coming from a culturally different part of China:

I went to Beijing when I was in primary school, and people there asked me questions about "Do you ride horses to your school?". A lot of those stereotypes and stuff like that. So that was the first time I realized, "Okay, I'm probably different from all of the other people, most of the other people in China." Well, it doesn't really affect me that much. I was in Beijing until three or two and a half years ago.

As a Chinese Mongol, her move from Inner Mongolia to Beijing resulted in her relocating from a part of China where ethnically she shared the culture of those around her, to China's capital where she became an ethnic minority. This movement exposed her at a young age to two very divergent cultures within China as well as the array of cultures that exist in a capital city. While other students moved specifically for their parents' employment, An indicated that her family specifically relocated to Beijing for the purpose of providing her with a more international worldview:

Well, [moving to Beijing was] my father's decision, because he thought it may be better for me to be raised in a city with more opportunities and that is more international so I can get in touch with more things.

This first experience with adapting to a new culture, albeit within her own country, resulted in her becoming familiar with the process of how to adjust to life in an environment that felt culturally foreign to her. This later helped her to adapt to life when she was studying abroad in Germany and ultimately prepared her to study at UCLA. “So when I went to Germany, when I came [to UCLA], I just feel like, ‘Okay, it's the same thing’. And trying to do the same thing, so it doesn't really feel that intimidating. Yeah, it's not really intimidating for me.”

Hui, while part of the ethnic Han majority, also experienced divergent cultures as a result of moving within China during her teenage years from a city in mainland China to Macau, a colony of Portugal until 1999 that is now a Special Administrative Region of China which has resulted in Macau having a distinct culture from the rest of China. For example, Mandarin is the primary language of where Hui grew up in Mainland China, while in Macau the primary language is Cantonese. In explaining how relocating to this new environment impacted her, Hui explained:

There was a transition time but it wasn't that rough, and then because I went to an international school, like people only speak English there [instead of Cantonese]. And at first I didn't really have much communication or interaction with local people in Macau [until] I joined like a guqin club. Guqin is a musical instrument. So everyone [in the guqin club] was local and they would talk to me in Mandarin, but they had really poor Mandarin so I was like, “Okay, I'll just learn Cantonese.” And then after I learned Cantonese, I [could] speak without a problem. So that's where I got to actually know more about the locals' life [and how they] are different from people in [Mainland] China.

During her upper secondary school years her family relocated to a part of China that is culturally distinct due to the cultural influence from its former colonial era, its unique political status as an autonomous territory of China, and being a region of China where Cantonese is the dominant language instead of the Mandarin that is spoken in Shenzhen where Hui was born. Because of

this, Hui was impacted through living in culturally different regions of China even though she is ethnically Han, the ethnic majority in both parts of China her and her family lived.

Wenling similarly experienced a divergent culture without leaving her country of citizenship when she travelled from Southern China to Beijing for the first time:

But what shocked me is that, you know, we speak Mandarin in China. But we do have different dialects. So in my area, specifically in the southern part of China... [it's] in a Canton area, so they talk to you in Cantonese... [S]o I actually speak Mandarin with an accent. I didn't know about that. So I go to Beijing, and they speak the formal Mandarin; so when I talked to them, they're like, "I don't know what you're talking about." I was like, "Hello? I'm speaking Mandarin. Why not? How come?" And then it took me awhile to figure out that actually I'm not speaking Mandarin. I have an accent, and usually for people also in my culture, it's hard to understand, and so I had to actually learn how to properly speak Mandarin... [B]ut after I learned that and then go back home, I have to switch to the Mandarin with accent when I speak to my family. But when I speak to someone who speaks the perfect Mandarin, I switch to perfect Mandarin. So it's like I'm switching between two types of language, I suppose. And that's when I started to realize, "Oh, the people in my place do speak with an accent." But if you don't go out of there, and you don't talk to people in other cities, you won't know. Everyone talks like that around me. So that's some kind of like, a cultural shock, within China.

This culture shock mirrored the experience that international students have in the U.S., providing Wenling with an initial understanding of what it would be like living and studying in an environment that is culturally and linguistically different from the one in which she grew up. These prior experiences interacting across difference within China helped prepare Chinese participants in this study to be able to adjust to living in a new culture in the U.S.

Having to adapt to a different culture within one's own country was not specific to Chinese students, but was also something shared by participants from India. Diya spent time living in the U.S. with her family as a child while her dad was earning his Master's degree at Princeton University, but her first experience with adapting to a new culture stemmed from her family relocating to a culturally different part of India when she was young:

[W]hen I was young and I moved [from South India] back to North India for a bit and we were living with our grandparent [in Delhi]... There's a lot of differences between North

India and South India. My grandmother didn't like that I knew too many languages. I knew four [Indian] languages and it was a problem because I started mixing like stuff in between. These are very different languages. Like North Indian languages are way different, even in that their base root is very different from like South Indian languages. I think it was that and there was just some other stuff that I think she didn't like that I used to speak South Indian languages, so I think me forgetting how to speak one or two languages can be attributed to her. Because she was just like, "I don't want you speaking in this language here" and I was like "Okay, I'm cool" and then I was young so I forgot the language and then when I moved back to South India, moved back to Bangalore specifically, I never needed to pick it up again because Bangalore runs completely on English. Every single person in Bangalore knows English. Yeah, that's the reason I'm now bilingual instead of quadrilingual, because of her.

Moving from Southern India to Northern India resulted in Diya experiencing cultural preferences in one region of her country that dictated how she needed to act in order to be accepted. The older generation in Northern India had a prejudice against the culture of Southern India.

Experiencing at a young age the cultural preferences of her extended family prepared her to handle the different cultural rules and expectations she would be surrounded by while living and learning in the U.S.

Having to adapt to a new culture within their country of citizenship, primarily as a result of moving between culturally distinct regions, exposed students to varying cultural perspectives. Whether this cultural difference was due to these communities differing along the rural/urban divide, being ethnically distinct, or differing linguistically these experiences resulted in participants having to adapt to a new culture within their country of citizenship. Growing up in culturally divergent parts of their country afforded these students cross-cultural experiences that in turn prepared them to be able to adapt to life in the U.S. and at UCLA.

Traveling outside country of citizenship

For other students, their first time interacting with a culture that was different from their own occurred during travels outside of their country of citizenship. For example, Prisha, a female student from India, struggled to remember her first time interacting with a new culture given the

vast number of cross-cultural experiences she has had. After taking a moment to pause and reflect, she identified her first exposure to a new culture having occurred at the international high school she attended in Singapore:

My first experience – Wow, I do not remember. I guess the one I remember very clearly is my friend in middle school, the Korean girl that I met. She was very welcoming and I was very scared. Because I could see the Indian people, but I'm like, but they look scary, too. Like, I don't know, are they Indians like me? Are they different? Do they hate other Indians? I don't know. Because I'd heard a lot about racism and how people don't like Indians, and Indians are annoying or whatever. So I was very, very scared about that. But she was really welcoming and she introduced me to her friends and it was a really nice experience.

I remember coming back home from school that day - the night before, I was crying because I was terrified of going to a new school - and I came back and I told my mom, "Oh my god, I love this place, it's amazing." And she still remembers that. She's like, you've done this with every school you've ever gone to. You've gone the first day and come back and said, I love this, I love Singapore, this is amazing, people are so nice. So my first interaction was definitely very positive.

This experience interacting with those different from herself equipped Prisha to interact across difference at UCLA because she had previous experiences being in a new environment and having to adapt to it. "Going to a different bunch of schools made it like I know what it's like to be the new kid, and trying to figure out the friend group and all that." Although she was still scared of making an effort to make new friends and expand her social circle at UCLA, she was able to draw on her previous experiences to thrive socially now that she was living in the U.S.

Nian echoed the sentiment that her first experience adapting to a new environment helped her socially integrate into the UCLA community through giving her a guide for how to navigate a new culture:

I would say it improved my mindsets. Like, when I transitioned here I didn't feel a lot of culture shock and stuff that's supposed to be [felt] by Chinese people... It's like the international traveling experience opened up my worldview and mindset to be like open minded and [embrace] diversity and those kinds of stuff.

Having prior culture shock experiences has made it so she was more comfortable navigating her feelings of culture shock when she began her studies at UCLA, thus making her transition to a new environment easier.

Growing up in global cities

Finally, nearly all participants grew up in global cities where they were exposed to varying cultural practices, including the cultural practices of other Asian cultures (e.g., Korean and Japanese pop culture) or Western culture primarily emanating from the U.S. or U.K. This was true across socioeconomic statuses and for both Chinese and Indian students. Students were raised in global cities such as Singapore (Ananya, Kiara, Ishan, and Prisha), Beijing (An, Daiyu, and Yu), New Delhi (Aadya and Saanvi), Guangzhou (Wenling, Nian, and Feng), Bangalore (Diya), Macau (Hui) and Shenzhen (Ying and Chen). Through having grown up in major cities participants were exposed to a greater diversity of ideas and cultures than what they would likely have encountered had they been raised in more rural parts of their country that were not as integrated into the global economy. For example, Saanvi is a female Indian student who did not get to live or study outside of India until she came to UCLA. However, she grew up in New Delhi, which is not only the capital of India, but also a major commercial sector of the country. Similarly, Nian, Wenling, and Feng grew up in Guangzhou, which in addition to being a global city is also a city situated on the border of two culturally distinct parts of China: mainland China and the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong.

The benefit of living in a global city was best encapsulated by Diya, who attributes growing up in a global city like Bangalore as the reason she was exposed to a wide array of cultures and developed a more global perspective:

[There is a stereotype that international students] don't know a lot of pop culture references right. I feel like in a way I do because... at least in India like American pop

music and American television is like something that the urban Indian youth grow up with. We live two lives you know like we live our Desi lives where we keep in touch with our own stuff and then we learn like then we hear music from like America which is basically pretty much like, if you went to any of my birthday parties, it would be a good mix of like Bollywood music and like American pop music, American and British pop music. Whatever is called pop music these days. You know what I mean, so but like maybe other international students or students coming from maybe like say tier two or tier three cities in India which aren't necessarily as ... where like Americanization hasn't seeped in as much, yeah, so they could feel completely out of it.

Ying, a female Chinese student, highlighted the value of growing up in Shenzhen that is not only a global city but also a city that contains a melding of cultures from throughout China due to the transient nature of the city's populace:

So I was born in Shenzhen It's like a city near Hong Kong. So just like a huge city... So Shenzhen is like relatively new because it was a, like a special district. So like a lot of people are not originally from there. So they just moved from other parts of China to there. And my parents are actually born in different regions of China and moved to Shenzhen.

Even though most participants in this study have had the chance to move throughout their country, move throughout the world, or study outside of their country of citizenship, this movement was not their only means to be exposed to the world beyond their borders. Growing up in global cities further exposed participants to the diverse cultures found in their country as well as being exposed to pop-cultures of the rest of the world. This exposure further altered how they view themselves and influenced the types of things that they value by exposing them to a variety of cultures and ideas throughout their formative years.

Prior Mobility Experience

A similar form of mobility capital stems from participants' previous experiences with traveling outside of their country of citizenship. Beyond having a first moment of adaptation, many participants also had multiple previous experiences with mobility that took them to a different part of the world for anywhere from a week to a few months. These prior experiences

abroad have prepared international students to live and study in a foreign environment through temporarily exposing these students in a different culture. Through having these experiences they further developed mobility capital needed to be successful in the U.S. International students can draw from these prior experiences visiting or living in a foreign environment to help them transition to the new culture in the U.S. that they find themselves immersed in at UCLA. Prior mobility experiences primarily stemmed from international tourism, moving abroad to Western countries, and through a variety of international education trips.

International tourism

Both Indian and Chinese participants had numerous experiences traveling abroad with their families for the purpose of tourism. These trips ranged from traveling to nearby countries in Asia to traveling to Europe or North America. For example, Jing had extensive experience going abroad before coming to UCLA:

So, I've been to a lot of countries. I was in more than 15. So, my family has interest to travel abroad. So, I went to Europe when I was ten. Oh, when I was eight, actually. And I actually went to New Zealand when I was ten, by myself. But it's just a language study for a month. So, I stayed at a home stay family, with them. And then we constantly travel. I would say at least once a year to some countries around the world. [My family and I have traveled to] Europe, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and there's this tiny, tiny country right next to Malaysia. Forgot what it's called. Not Singapore, but another one. You can go there when you go to Malaysia and Singapore. I mean Malaysia and Indonesia, because they're so close to each other. So, we just go to all of them at once.

Such extensive international travel was not unique to Jing, but was shared by many of the students in this study. Prisha similarly had numerous international travel experiences while growing up:

Oh, okay. Yeah, I've been to a lot of countries, traveling abroad, like the first one I went to was London. I've been to Switzerland, I've been to almost every single Asian country in that Singapore vicinity because it's so close by. Yeah, I have traveled a lot. My parents have traveled a lot. My dad has probably been to over a hundred countries. So, yeah, he travels to really weird small countries, as well. But yeah, I have traveled quite a bit. And I

haven't been to a lot of Europe. I haven't been to Africa area at all. And the South America area. So my main travels are all in the Asian area.

Likewise, Aadya's father was a travel agent, which enabled her and her family to extensively travel throughout the world and be exposed to different cultures:

So my dad's actually a travel agent, so yeah. So he used to get like free tickets and like, you know, stuff. So we were very well traveled. Um, I think I was three when I traveled for the first time to Switzerland and then yeah, like throughout my life I've been to various countries, many Asian countries, like multiple times. Europe not so much. I visited the U.S. a few times, but yeah, I think mostly in Asia... [When I visited the U.S.] I came to the East Coast. So New York, Louisiana... we had relatives [in] New Orleans... and then Miami.

While most of the trips abroad that students took with their families while growing up involved going to tourist destinations or visiting family members, this did not mean that participants were never able to interact with the local community. For example, Aadya indicated that she had the opportunity to interact with locals, albeit in a limited context:

[We visited] mostly tourist destinations. But like through that you kind of have to interact with people. Like, especially like when we were traveling within a country. Like on a plane or something. So I would already be sitting with a random person... So I would usually end up talking to them. Or like when you're asking for directions or taking a taxi. Stuff like that. So like just the touristy kind of interactions I guess nothing like personal.

Although many of the international travel experiences participants had growing up were for the purpose of tourism, this does not mean that through these trips students did not experience similar language and cultural barriers they would encounter if they eventually studied abroad.

Ying said that her being a tourist in the U.K. forced her to come to terms with her language proficiency:

[When me, my parents, and] my friends and their parents went to U.K. we didn't have any like help from outside. Like we didn't like go [through a] travel agency, we didn't have any tour guide so it was actually pretty difficult because my English back then really sucked. It was like extremely difficult because my parents didn't speak English, they still don't but that's okay. ... My friend was the same age as I was so like she's just suck at English equally and her parents didn't speak English. So along the trip we really

have to like push ourselves. Like I remember like it was like such a struggle to just find the restaurant because we didn't really understand like what their menus are talking about we have to like check the dictionary on our phone, while like making the order. So it was like really hard. And until then I realized my English wasn't that as good as I thought. So I really try to like, study more and ... had the idea of going abroad.

This experience presented Ying with the opportunity to realize the deficiencies in her English language ability so that she could rectify them before she came to UCLA and thus soften her transition to living in the U.S.

Prior experiences abroad did not just provide international students with an opportunity to assess how prepared they were to live abroad, but also developed within them the skills needed to adjust to living in a foreign environment. Ananya encapsulates how her prior experiences abroad directly aided her transition to life at UCLA explaining what these experiences provided her:

Mainly just adaptability I guess in everything. I feel like not just social. Not just making friends [but] also adapting to a new environment away from home. Not feeling homesickness a lot, because I've been away from my home for so long. There's a lot of that. I feel like my experience has been very unique just because I've seen all these different places. So in a way nothing new phases me anymore...

Wenling shared the sentiment that her numerous travels abroad made it easier to transition to life in the U.S.:

I've been moving to different places. So I feel that I'm not that intimidated to take the first step to talk to people over here... [It's] not going to hurt me mentally, 'cause I have [experienced] that before. So, that part definitely helps.

And also, I have always been traveling to different places by myself... I traveled to Hong Kong by myself... I [flew] to Beijing for interviews by myself... So, I'm not that intimidated by going out, like doing a trip by myself. So, I felt that already trained me to, kind of withhold all this loneliness. And I really learned how to live independently. So I think that helped a lot when I got [to UCLA]. I don't get homesick that often.

International travel often developed within participants the ability to successfully navigate life in a new country, thus easing their transition to study at UCLA and living in Los Angeles.

Moving abroad within Asia

While most students in this study experienced mobility via tourism, other students in this study had prior mobility experiences as a result of having moved throughout Asia during their youth. This resulted in these students being surrounded by communities and cultures that differed across not only ethnic or linguistic lines but also national lines. For many Indian students, this meant moving from India to South East Asia. For example, Ananya and her family relocated from India to Indonesia due to her parents work:

So I was born in India, in New Delhi. I moved from there to Singapore when I was in sixth grade. Then for eighth grade and ninth grade I was in Indonesia. I have a younger sister and we were all for [moving] at the very beginning of this entire experience. I think my parents usually would get concerned sometimes. They were like, "Oh, we're having to move you around so much. You guys won't fit in or maybe you'd want to switch out from school immediately when you get there." It was never thankfully like that. It was always a very welcoming community. All these schools were very international in their own nature. People would be moving in and out all the time, so everyone wherever we would go was used to this entire thing.

Even though she lived in countries with large Indian expat communities, she was still being exposed to a wide variety of different cultures and people groups:

Until I came to UCLA I did not have a lot of Indian friends. Yeah, even though wherever we moved around in Asia there would be a lot of Indian expats all over, because [my international] school was such a great mix there was never like an over representation of a certain kind of ethnic group. I feel like most of my friends would ... A lot of them used to actually [live in] America, many of them were White or East Asian.

Prisha similarly relocated with her family from India to Singapore. Responding to how this experience affected her, she indicated that although it was difficult at first, it ultimately resulted in her becoming friends with people she would never have been exposed to if her family had not moved abroad:

I remember the first day, when my parents told me we were moving to Singapore. I'm like, what? I'd never moved. Like, we'd moved a lot of houses in Mumbai, but I'd never moved out of Mumbai for twelve years. And now you're asking me to ship to a different country. So it was terrifying. But once we got there, I was like, "Okay, this is weird.

There's no pollution, there's no traffic, there's no honking. I don't know what's happening. I can't get used to this.” But then once school started, I clearly remember our school had a buddy system, so every time there's a new student in class, one of the students that has been there a year or more, they'll sign up to be a buddy. So my buddy was a Korean girl and that was my first interaction with [someone from a different culture]... She became one of my best friends and I was like, “Okay, wow. I thought the world was just Indians everywhere.” Like my class obviously did have a lot of Indians because Singapore does have a lot of Indians. So yeah, my first friend was a Korean, then a Mexican, then a Singaporean, I'm like, “Wow, this is wild.”

As a result of her family relocating to Singapore, she was exposed to a variety of cultures and people that she may not have otherwise met had she and her family not moved across national borders. Interacting with friends and peers from throughout the world ultimately altered her understanding of the world, by changing her personal taste and her understanding of differing world views:

That was a really nice experience, to learn a lot from their cultures. I found out kimchi tastes amazing. It sounds terrible, but I was like, “Oh damn, kimchi is great.” Yeah, and then I started making a lot more different friends. I had to learn a lot more, definitely ... But I got to definitely understand the points of views, and there's a very different way of people looking at things and understanding things, and just the values that they have can differ or be similar to mine. ... but going through high school, I started to see the difference in the way people have been brought up and their values and their approach to different things.

Kiara similarly moved with her family from India to Singapore where she too was exposed to not only a large Indian expat community, but also to a diverse range of individuals from various parts of Asia:

So I am Indian but I grew up in Singapore, moved there when I was four. It was like – Singapore is a pretty diverse country. I would say it was a little more expat than like mixed. So like in Singapore we have this concept of like government housing and so a lot of the locals lived there and then again, when you're not a citizen, then you can't really get it. So we ended up going into like the slightly more expensive areas ... I mean you do see like local people, but I would say that a lot of like expats, like not just Indians but like everyone.

In describing how this transition to a new culture impacted her, Kiara said that it was a shock at first, but she was able to transition since she moved to Singapore when she was young:

I mean obviously initially there was that bit of shock because I was pretty young, like it ended up being something that I was super used to. So when I [moved back] to India, that's when I get a little like, this is a little weird... But I think I've, I've, I typically adjust pretty well. So it wasn't like a big issue or something.

Living in both Singapore and India resulted in Kiara experiencing two distinct cultures and having to adjust to life in these different countries. This experience not only exposed her at a young age to different cultures, but also made her feel comfortable adjusting to new environments.

Moving abroad to Western countries

Beyond moving throughout Asia, some participants were exposed to cultures beyond what they grew up surrounded by as a result of moving from Asia to Western countries. Both Indian and Chinese students in this study reported moving to Western nations either on their own in boarding school or with their immediate family members. Through these experiences participants, often at a young age, partook in a culture that was different from the one in which they were born. For example, Akshay is a male Indian student who holds citizenship in both India and the Netherlands. This dual citizenship enabled him to be raised in both Europe and India:

Right, so as I mentioned I was born in Paris, I was there for a year, then London for a year, Amsterdam for ten, and then Delhi for eight. And now I've been in L.A. for the past three years. Being in Europe really allows you to see all of Europe, just because it's a very interconnected continent, and also it's globally right in the middle. So I would say my first 15 years I traveled a lot with my family, I consider myself very well traveled. I've seen almost every country in the world apart from many in Africa and some in South America. But yeah there was a lot of traveling.

The financial means of Akshay's family and his dual citizenship eased his ability to cross international borders, enabling him to live and travel throughout Europe and live in India during his childhood. This exposed him at a young age to a variety of cultures, particularly the cultures of Western Nations, ultimately helping to form how he understands himself.

Both Indian and Chinese students who participated in this study had similar opportunities to live in the U.S. and New Zealand before coming to UCLA. These experiences took place during students' primary or secondary educations resulting in them not only living in Western countries but also being enrolled in Western schools. This exposed participants at a young age to cultural and educational norms that were different than the ones they had been exposed to within their countries of citizenship. For example, Jing, a Chinese female student, briefly attended a boarding school in New Zealand:

So, the high school that I went to [in New Zealand] was pretty special... So, there's only one or two local New Zealanders who went to my high school. So, it's basically all international students. So, it's diverse but it's not that diverse. It's within Asian countries diversity. It's like there's Koreans, there's Japanese students. And there's Vietnamese students. What else? There's local students who are Asian but born and raised in New Zealand...

In answering how the experience was transitioning from a normal public school in China to a boarding school in New Zealand where the instruction was entirely in English, Jing replied:

I would say it's a big change. So, the thing I had to adjust the most to is how I now live independently on my own. Instead of with my parents. So, that's a huge shift. But in terms of education, or language, I didn't find it that difficult.

Studying in New Zealand gave her the chance to live on her own in another country with a different culture than the one in which she grew up. While at boarding school she interacted with students from throughout the world, whether they were from New Zealand, Korea, or Japan, and to learn from these students' different cultural perspectives.

Students whose families briefly lived in the U.S had similar experiences to Jing. Diya, a female Indian student, briefly lived in the U.S. with her family:

Basically some of the top performing bureaucrats from the [Indian] administrative services are sent to colleges abroad, fully funded by the Indian government so that they learn and then they take it back... [So my father] came to Princeton to pursue his Master's. He did an MPP at Princeton. He was like forty years old [at the time] and he wasn't going to leave his family behind for like two years. So we moved with him to the

U.S. for about two years [starting when] I was in third grade. I went to a public elementary school in Princeton.

While this was an experience when she was very young, Diya identified it as being one of her more impactful life experiences. On whether or not she remembers this experience and if it impacted her, she replied:

No, I remember it. I think it was a life changing experience. I was pretty glad to have that. It was a very different system from what I was used to. Yeah, and then when I came to the U.S., I don't know why it stands out to me particularly, it does because like of the naivety of the situation. I think it was in Princeton, in [my elementary school] we were watching a Rosa Parks play. I still remember the actress got up and there was like a cutout which was serving as a bus and then she said the famous line like "All colored people black, yellow, brown," several other colors, I now forget. She said that and like a bunch of us burst out laughing because we just found it hilarious. Like what do you mean black, blue, yellow, pink? What does this mean?

I mean at least for me this was my first time encountering people being labeled in terms of colors. So it never crossed my mind that it referred to people. I was just like, what is she talking about? And then our homeroom teacher explained [racism] to us and then it sank in. Yeah, I remember I came back home and I told my parents and I was upset... It was my first time encountering, I don't know, just encountering those words. [I] never really obviously encountered racism in India. Like we are very diverse in India but everybody has the same skin color.

Through living and going to school in the U.S., Diya was exposed to an entirely different way of looking at the world, albeit a heinous one. Although she was dismayed by the knowledge that people are discriminated against due to their skin color in the U.S., this experience forced her at a young age to come to terms with the fact that the way the world is understood in India is not the same as the way people in the U.S. understand things.

Although some participants relocated with their families to the U.S. as children, at least one student came to the U.S. on her own. Zhi, a female Chinese student, attended high school in Philadelphia while her family remained back in China. Her family's decision to have her attend high school in the U.S. sprang out of a culture in her community in China that sought to provide

children with the opportunity to study in the U.S. as a means to help prepare them for their eventual tertiary education in a Western country. Describing her Mom, Zia says:

...she's a professor so she has like the educational support ... some of her friends, they are also thinking [of] sending their kids to study abroad. So, we were kind of surrounded by that environment I guess. And... we had the financial support so she started to reach out to different agencies and started to know more about how to study abroad and which cities, what kind of schools, and get [to] know more about that and start to plan. And I also went to the UK after the second year of my secondary school and I lived with a host family there.

Zhi ended up spending two years studying at a U.S. high school before being admitted to UCLA. Through attending high school in the U.S., Zhi experienced life in the U.S. for an extended period of time and truly lived in a different culture than what was found in the country in which she grew up.

International education trips

Participants' prior experience with mobility was not limited to only experiences stemming from international students traveling abroad with their families or moving to different countries throughout their youth, but also occurred through students participating in international education trips during their secondary education. A vast majority of participants discussed prior experiences that they had with enrolling in education abroad trips that were organized by private organizations or participating in study abroad programs through their secondary schools. These trips provide invaluable experience regardless of a student's citizenship, gender, or socioeconomic status. Because of this, nearly all participants arrived at UCLA with having some form of an experience living and studying abroad, whether for a week or for an entire semester.

Through public or private high school programs

Moving throughout the world, whether between culturally distinct regions of one's country of citizenship or from one country to another, was primarily restricted to participants

from higher socioeconomic statuses (SES). This fact does not mean that international students coming from lower SES families did not have international or cross-cultural experiences before they arrived at UCLA. Participants who attended either public or private high schools in China and India had opportunities to travel internationally as part of their school's curriculum. This was true regardless of students' socioeconomic status. This has resulted in students outside of those with economic privilege being able to access cross-cultural and international experiences that help to shape them before they arrive in the U.S.

For example, Chen who is a male Chinese student, describes his family as not being from a high socioeconomic status due to his parents not having attended a traditional college and due to their financial status. However, his parents still valued him receiving a good education. "I wouldn't say we're a rich, family, but I think my parents got, um, got very prepared to provide me with basically whatever I need, especially educational experiences." His parents were not able to take him on international holidays or relocate internationally for work, but they did prioritize his education. This included ensuring that his secondary education included international travel that could expose him to Western schools and culture:

I remember very clearly the first time I went abroad. It was a summer camp held by our school. We were in part of the U.K. I think the name of the city was Bournemouth. I don't quite remember. But it's a very small city. I think most of the U.K. cities are like very small and very country style [and] not like London. I went there to stay in a host family with another friend for about two weeks I think. I don't quite remember.

We [went] to a small local international school that is just for a student's interested in studying English. Uh, but that's pretty great because that was the first time I had the chance to talk with like foreign teachers continuously for a whole week. [Previously] I took some like English speaking classes with like foreign teachers when I was very young. But that was like once a week. So not very intense...

But [studying in England] was really different and also difficult because it was the first time to I had to talk in English for like two weeks straight. But I think that shaped my confidence in talking. And while there I got to communicate with the other students [from throughout the world] from say Brazil, or from the U.S., or from the U.K., or from

France. Uh, there were some like cultural background differences, so the communication might not have always been that smooth, but I still got a chance to talk with them and to learn what they were focusing on and what their educational goals were.

The opportunity to study abroad through his school provided Chen the chance to interact with not only students from the U.K. but also students from France, Brazil, and the U.S., exposing him to a broad array of cultures.

According to Ananya, “[W]ith school I have traveled quite a bit too, because I think international schools in Asia put on a lot of these trips ... [For example], during eighth grade we went to China from Indonesia.” Daiyu, a female student from China, similarly attended an international high school which, “[gave her] the opportunity to travel around the world during summer vacation” providing her and her classmates with the opportunity to live and study in England:

So my friend and I just went to England and Europe. So we basically spent a week in Cambridge, and then [took a] one-day tour around the city. Then we traveled to Europe, like France and Germany for another week.

This trip included both cultural and educational components with Daiyu attending lectures, visiting local museums, and living with a home stay family, permitting her to interact with locals outside of an educational setting:

The teachers are from the local community. They [mainly spoke] to us in English. We also stayed with a home stay family. So we had the chance to talk to them and learn their culture, and basically they provided us food. So I had the chance to see the ordinary life, daily life, of English people.

While many of these school-sponsored trips include a focus on practicing conversational English and learning formal English in a classroom setting, they all further presented participants with the chance to interact with locals and to experience a culture that was not familiar to them.

International schools gave the most direct pathway for students to have international experiences if their families did not move abroad, but these were not the only means for students

to travel abroad via school. An did not attend an international school but was still able to travel abroad through extracurricular activities her school held. “I went with my [school] orchestra to America, to Australia, to Europe, several times. So it's a whole bunch of opportunities available for students.” While these trips were short-term, her school also offered an opportunity for students to spend a semester living and studying in Germany, which An participated in, enabling her to interact with German locals. The high school in Germany An enrolled in was attended, “mostly [by] people from the local area, because that town is basically for Benz, so [most student’s families] are working there. So it's just several Chinese international students, and then people like local kids.” Through her school’s study abroad program she was immersed in a completely different culture from her own for an entire academic term.

International travel via participants’ schools may have been for only a short duration compared to the experiences of international students whose families relocated to different parts of the world for extended periods of time, but this does not mean that these short-term trips were not transformative. Temporarily living and learning in a new country resulted in these students being immersed in a new culture which they felt helped shape how they view themselves and the rest of the world.

Through short-term education abroad organizations

Not all students attended secondary schools that organized opportunities to travel or study abroad. However, participants who did not receive this opportunity via school commonly were able to enroll in short term education abroad programs, typically during the summer, through private organizations. These trips were located in Western countries and overwhelmingly incorporated visits to colleges and universities within the country that the student was visiting. For example, Feng did not have the chance to travel internationally with her family or to relocate

throughout the world, but she did have the chance to visit the U.S. during the summers before grade 10 and 11:

In [summer before grade 10] I went to [University of Texas] Austin. It's more like a traveling than studying to be honest, even though they have like some, you know, SAT test [prep]... And then they also taught us [some] philosophy, Aristotle's work, but it felt difficult to understand to be honest. And then my second year, grade 11, the summer of grade 11 I went to UC Berkeley for the summer. Summer school, yeah and then I took two classes there.

In discussing the type of education and benefit that she received from these trips, Feng expressed that although her program at the University of Texas at Austin (UTA) was on the UTA campus, the primary benefit of this program was not educational but instead helping her culturally learn about the U.S. and academic life:

I don't think it's really associated with the school. It's more like a private teacher or something... We lived in the dorm rooms of UT Austin, the school, but we didn't study inside of school. We were studying somewhere. ... I don't remember exactly but I feel like [I] didn't learn anything from there to be honest. ... [It was] more like... like getting to know US, like the culture, the environment. I would say it's more like getting the feeling of being in U.S.

Yu, a female Chinese student, participated in a similar education abroad program that was loosely affiliated with Stanford University. Yu expressed that such programs have become the norm for many Chinese students as a means to prepare to study abroad outside of China and to make their admissions applications more competitive. On why she chose to participate in the program at Stanford she indicated:

I think the reason why I chose to go for that program was because, you know, since people were starting to prepare for their college applications when we entered high school and we want to have more extracurricular activities. There is also a trend of like studying abroad for a few weeks during the summer or winter break.

This expectation that a student must have spent time abroad to be a competitive applicant to a U.S. college or university has likely contributed to the large numbers of students in this

study having spent time abroad through either official school programs or via private education abroad companies. This pattern has further resulted in the creation of numerous, privately-operated education abroad programs aimed at Chinese and Indian students. For example, Nian had a family member who owned their own private education abroad company that resulted in her being able to visit elite U.S. universities regularly while growing up:

So we started as like taking student groups to travel every winter and summer vacation... Yeah. So starting my grade five I started going abroad like twice a year. Oh Wow. Just follow her groups [on] college tours. So it's gonna be a, it's two weeks tour, one week about learning the local culture and some languages in a local school. Another week is just sightseeing. The countries I've been to includes Australia and the U.K., France, Austria, United States for sure, Canada. That should be it. Yeah. So basically it's a places with higher education that parents are interested in.

Nian talked about how prior experience studying abroad made her feel more comfortable approaching faculty or staff with questions here at UCLA:

I feel like my traveling experience helped a lot too. ... because I've already made a lot of silly mistakes before. I don't care about making more mistakes, so I don't care. I mean, so I don't mind reaching out to faculty even though [there is the possibility of rejection]. But then for some of the faculty I've actually succeeded. So that's why I got a lot of like opportunities and stuff like that. Um, I guess that's mainly what most Chinese people cannot come across because they were like, "What if I make mistakes? People would judge me [or] teacher will not like me and blah blah blah." Like it's gonna be a shame if I made those mistakes, but then it's fine. Yeah. That's the main thing.

Nian had the chance to make previous missteps while studying outside of the U.S. and has felt rejected by professors in the past, but learned it was ultimately better to risk rejection. This experience has made her more courageous in her current interaction with faculty at UCLA.

Wenling, a female student from China, partook in a private education abroad program where she studied at Duke University during the summer. She similarly expressed that despite this program having an educational component, it was most valuable due to it having a cross-cultural experience:

So, I found summer school at Duke University, in 2015, I guess from July to August. So I took one Econ class which is called Game Theory. Yeah. It was really cool. It's not a super-hard class. So I only take one class over the whole month, so it's pretty chill, but I also meet with a lot of different students, mostly from China. We have college students, all the high school students in one class, and we also have some local high school students just have from here. So, I get to meet a lot of people and definitely get to know about how does U.S. colleges work, and get to walk around the campus. It's pretty cool.

Wenling's summer abroad program had a definitive educational component, but it also afforded her with the opportunity to get to know U.S. students and to familiarize herself with the U.S. education system. Yu echoed these sentiments explaining how through her education abroad program she also was able to interact with local U.S. students:

I think the experience overall was pretty good, even though my English back then was not as great as right now. But I actually made friends from like not only Chinese, I actually make friends from other [countries], like from America.

Finally, Feng spent time studying in the U.S. over one of her summer breaks in high school, taking courses from UC Berkeley:

I took two classes, one is a, like a college [psych class], a university level and I can transfer credit to here. And the other one... it's like a writing class... One thing I remember is, 'cause there is no office hour like no concept [of office hours] in China I guess. So I went to the office hour of the professor at that time and I was kind of nervous because it's a new experience and then it's very one-on-one. It's one-to-one, so there's only me and the professor and I was so nervous and I still remember like the, you know, the lay out the room and then [the] sound like the sound of A.C. or something, I don't know exactly, but I remember [the] environment. And, and I asked him some question about like career or about the course specifically... And I also asked him about like the field of psychology because I'm pretty interested in psychology...

Feng credited having this prior experience taking courses at a U.S. university and having firsthand experience interacting with faculty members with making it so that she was better prepared to interact with faculty while studying at UCLA.

Even though the types of trips these students participated in were short and tangentially educational, they still presented them with the chance to live in another country on their own and to interact with students from cultures that were different from their own during their formative

years. These experience in turn helped to develop in students the ability to navigate life in a foreign country. Short-term education abroad programs further exposed students to Western approaches to education which helped prepare them to be able to adjust to the academic norms at UCLA.

Through long-term education abroad programs

Participants not only participated in short-term education abroad programs, but also enrolled in education abroad programs that ranged from a semester long to two years. These long-term education abroad programs offered students the opportunity to experience adapting to a new culture without the built-in support system of their family as well as immersed participants in Western education systems. For example, Hui shared how her studying abroad in Canada made her more confident in her ability to be able to adapt to studying in the U.S.:

I was exchanging in Canada for half a year... in high school when I was grade 11. The school was in a little town in Canada. So like the whole school had 600 or 700 people. Only five including me were Chinese. So like I basically made friends with everyone else.... That experience made me feel that I'm okay with experiencing new things. So like I'm ok with trying [new things]... I think that's how you open your mind to others when you are in a new environment.

Through prior experiences adapting to a new culture participants gained familiarity with how to adjust to living in a foreign country. Since they have experienced the stress of this type of transition in the past, adjusting to life at UCLA did not seem daunting to them and was therefore easier to manage.

Prior experience studying abroad not only allowed participants to experience adjusting to a new culture, but gave many students the opportunity to experience the academic norms of the U.S. education system. Zhi spent part of high school studying in the U.S., which gave her an

understanding of the cultural norms of the higher education system in the U.S., which prepared her to succeed academically at UCLA:

I think studying [in] a high school in the U.S., it definitely made it easier because I have those two-years [of] experience. I have two years of transition time. So when I came to study at UCLA, I already had some background knowledge about how the classmates are going to be, how professors are going to be, like lecture. I already had some background knowledge so it's been easier for me. And also I already [had] been away from home for two years so I won't get home sick that often.

Personality Features of a Potential Wanderer

International students did not only develop mobility capital through interacting with new cultures and through traveling and studying abroad in grade school. They further exhibited personality features of a potential wanderer (i.e., being open-minded with a desire to explore the world and engage in new experiences). These personality features were often created as well as reinforced by the prior travel experiences of students. For Diya, previous international travels made her even more interested in continuing to experience different places and cultures:

I was just speaking to my parents about it and they were like “Why is it necessary that you want to like travel every holiday that you get. It's an expensive hobby to travel you know.” And I was just like you kind of get addicted to that like the sense of exploring. Yeah, the wanderlust, it's a problem though. Stuff like that, like if not now, then when?

These personality traits do not just drive these students to study abroad, but further help them during their time studying in the U.S. Aadya explains that it was not so much her prior experiences that enabled her to succeed socially at UCLA, but instead it was her personality:

I think it was more... just my personality. I feel because a lot of the other people they were raised in similar ways, you know, location wise, family structure, all of that. I don't know. I [was] just always wanting to like explore like different cultures and like just get to interact with other people. So I mean I need a lot of friends who are like from Turkey a lot of friends. Yeah, like random. Um, yeah, a lot of friends from here and just um, you know, Middle East and I don't know, different areas. ...I think I was just kind of sick of like the typical Indian friends that I already had, you know, like I love all of my friends back home, but it's like I think beyond a point, most of the group dynamics are very obvious, like different.

An likewise indicated that she chose to study at UCLA because she has always been drawn to new experiences:

I think I just wanted to change to a brand new environment and location to see what happened and experience something that is really different from what I've been experiencing. It's just 'cause I think, for me, looking back, I think I still have the opportunity and time and effort and chance to actually travel all the way across the Pacific Ocean to see a new country and to study or live there for several years. I'm gonna hold onto this opportunity to do this. I was not thinking about what will I do afterwards and stuff like that. I was just thinking that if I can do this, I will do it.

It was not just these new experiences that a segment of participants were drawn to. Instead, participants were also drawn to the idea of meeting new people who have different cultures and backgrounds from their own. Kiara encapsulated this idea explaining that her personality naturally drew her to befriend people who were different from her:

Um, then again it just like being chill, like that's like a big thing hahaha. Like I don't know how else to like to word it, it just kind of sounding like someone that's like not kind of stuck in their own, like I'm not stuck in Singapore. I love to like learn about like people over here and like what their families were like, like what do they do and like all that stuff. So like wanting to learn about the other person's culture and like that kind of stuff.

These personality traits do not just drive these students to study abroad, but further help them during their time studying in the U.S. For example, when responding to what from her background made her able to succeed socially at UCLA, Aadya explained that it was not so much her prior experiences abroad but instead her personality:

I think it was more of my personality. I don't know. [I'm] just always wanting to like explore different cultures and just get to interact with other people. I need a lot of friends who are like from Turkey, a lot of friends from [the U.S.], and a lot of friends from the Middle East, and I don't know different areas. I think I was just kind of sick of like the typical Indian friends that I already had, you know?

Just as many participants indicated that they were introverts, preferred to have a small yet close group of friends, or did not identify as adventure seekers despite studying thousands of miles from where they grew up. So while some students were certainly able to draw upon their

personalities as a means to push themselves to be able to adapt to life in the U.S., this was by no means a universal trait of participants from either India or China.

International High Schools or International Track

A unique form of mobility capital that a large majority of participants were able to draw from was developed through their having attended an international high school or participating in a special international curriculum at a regular secondary school. Given the large numbers of students from China (369,548) and India (202,014) that chose to attend colleges and universities in Western nations (Institute of International Education, 2019b), numerous international high schools and curricula have been created to aid students planning to earn a bachelor's degree in a foreign country. These international schools or curricula create both a culture of studying abroad as well as gives their students the requisite knowledge and skills to thrive while studying in the U.S.

International schools and regular schools that have an optional international curriculum each contribute to the socialization of their students by reinforcing the idea of attending college or university in another country. These schools and programs surround students with peers who were similarly focused on preparing to study in a Western nation rather than their own. Ananya explains that the international high school she attended created and reinforced the idea of studying abroad to her and her classmates. "My high school's culture was kind of like, most kids just [go] abroad to study. I was very confused about where I wanted to [go to college]. I honestly didn't know what I wanted to do." Despite this uncertainty, Ananya decided to apply to colleges in the U.S. and ultimately attend UCLA because this was what her classmates were doing. Aadya similarly explained that at her international high schools almost everyone opted to apply to colleges and universities throughout the world. In discussing why she decided to apply to schools

in the U.S., she explained, “Um, so I think it was kind of, again, like my high school's culture was kind of like, oh, like most kids just [go] abroad to study.”

The push to go abroad to earn a Bachelor’s degree does not only occur within international schools, but was also prevalent throughout the culture in which many of participants grew up. Yu explained that, “[M]y parents, I guess they also like[d] the idea of [me going abroad for] education, especially in the U.S. And then I think back then... there was an increasing trend of students from China who actually go abroad for universities. I followed the trend I guess.” Part of this trend included attending a high school with an international curriculum that was specifically designed to aid students in attending a university abroad. Students and their families looked to international high schools as a means for students to gain the skills and cultural capital that could aid them in not only gaining admission to an overseas university but also to be able to thrive in such an environment. Zhi shared this same experience of having the surrounding community in China be focused on sending their children abroad to earn a Bachelor’s degree. As previously discussed, Zhi’s mother is a professor whose friends were all planning for their children to earn a degree outside of China. The trend to study outside of China or India has resulted in students seeking out international high schools or public schools that have an international track as a means to prepare these students to not only be competitive applicants to foreign postsecondary institutions, but to also prepare these students to navigate their time studying in the U.S. The courses in these types of schools often went beyond just how to prepare for standardized college entrance exams or how to apply to colleges in Western nations, but also included lessons on Western cultural norms. For example, Yu explained that at her high school:

[W]e did have a class about a college application, that class was ...the routines were like the steps we go through the application process and then I remember also taking like we learned a little bit about like a U.K. culture or American culture, something like that.

In replying to whether or not she believed these courses helped her to adjust to life at UCLA, Yu stated:

Yeah, I think yeah, it is good to actually know more about the culture. And also by talking to somebody, by talking to the teachers who are from America or other countries, I could get an idea of what is it like in the U.S.

International high schools and regular high schools with an international track surrounded participants with a culture that encourages going abroad for their tertiary education while also preparing them for to be able to adjust to the culture of life in Western nations. This push in turn provided participants with a unique form of mobility capital they could draw upon during their studies at UCLA.

Western curriculum

International high schools and regular schools that have an international track not only normalized the idea of enrolling in a Western university, but additionally familiarized its students with a Western curriculum. This was most often achieved through incorporating Advanced Placement (AP) courses (i.e., U.S. college level courses) or the International Bachelorette (IB) program (i.e., a Swiss based academic program that has coursework which can similarly be transferred to U.S. institutions of higher education for college level credit). AP courses were used at the schools of Nian, An, Chen, Ying, and Feng, while the IB program was utilized by schools attended by Daiyu, Ananya, Ishan, Prisha, Saanvi, and Kiara. AP and IB courses helped prepare students from both India and China for the rigors of university-level academics as well as exposed them to Western approach to learning similar to those found at UCLA.

For example, Ying felt that having taken AP courses during high school helped her to refine her study habits and prepared her for the academic rigor of university-level courses:

So I took AP classes so that's like helpful... I took a lot of AP classes. Like Econ, Chemistry, and Physics. Which like now those [same classes] I've taken at UCLA so they really prepared me to have a better understanding of course materials. Like how to study and stuff like that.

Kiara whose high school used the IB program shared this same sentiment that the rigor of coursework at UCLA was more manageable thanks to having participated in the IB program:

I think the IB prepped me pretty well for like academics, my first year at UCLA was not as hard as my last year in high school, so because it was pretty rigorous. So I feel like, when you're international you come in a little better perhaps like in terms of like how to study and like at least personally for me, I'm [a] pretty independent studier so like I never needed my parents to push me.

Taking university-level coursework while in high school thus prepped these students to be able to succeed academically while at UCLA by exposing them to the type of rigor that they would experience in university level coursework in the U.S.

It was however not just the difficulty of AP and IB coursework that prepped participants to study in the U.S. Rather, the Western nature of these courses also made them ideal for preparing international students to study in the U.S. Saanvi said that it has been easy to do well academically at UCLA despite the different academic norms in the U.S. due to the preparation she received from her IB courses:

IB helped with like with the academic part, like now I am more used to essay writing and like, labs... And then the IB kind of taught you that you should learn how to apply stuff which I'm still getting used to.

The IB program used at her school required her to write essays and work in small group labs in a manner done at Western schools. These activities prepared her to be able to adjust to the academic norms at UCLA. The Western-style curriculum at Ananya's high school similarly mimicked the education style of Western universities:

They would actually have a lot of office hours type of stuff. Yeah. So you were really encouraged from the get go to start getting to know your teachers. Go to them if you want help. Like no one's coming after you. That type of thing. Just in general I think the level of difficulty. They really tried to amp it up to give you a taste of what college would be like. A lot of classes were – like at UCLA or any school there are classes notorious for being like super hard or and there be websites for reviews for like professors and teachers. Yeah. It was very ... I wouldn't say the exact same thing, but I think in a lot of ways I was more prepared than many others would be.

Having her high school be structured like a U.S. university helped Ananya be familiar with interacting with teachers in a one-on-one setting, thus preparing her to be able to have the knowledge for how to navigate academic life at UCLA. Whether international schools offered AP courses, IB courses, or mirrored the complete curriculum of a Western nation, these educational activities exposed international students to a style of education similar to the one they would encounter while at UCA. This exposure prepared them to be able to succeed academically in the U.S. higher education environment before they arrived on the UCLA campus.

English education

The schools that participants attended, whether they were international high schools, just had an international track, or used a Western program of study, further utilized English instruction. English was either a specific required course (Li, Nian, An, Chen, Daiyu, Zhi, Wenling, Yu, Ying, and Feng) or was used for all instruction (Jing, Arjun, Diya, Ishan, Prisha, Akshay, Saanvi, Aadya, Kiara, and Ananya) at every participant's high school. At the national level in China, for example, English is a required course for all students as Wenling explained, "Yes. I think in China it's more like a national level, like you start studying English in the third grade of elementary school and all 'til you graduate from college." Arjun, a male Indian student, shared that she similarly had English instruction at a very young age stating that, "I was taught the ABC's before the Hindi alphabet." Additionally, the parents of many students, particularly

the parents of Indian students, also spoke English at home which further helped to solidify any formal English education that participants received through school.

International schools that were conducted entirely in English or had specific English courses that built upon the English education many participants began at a young age.

Participants, both from China and India, believed that studying English directly aided them in being able to succeed while at UCLA. For example, Chen felt that his prior English language instruction helped help him develop his confidence:

I took some like English speaking class with like foreign teachers when I was very young, but that was like once a week. So not very intense and about 45 minutes it will be like. But it was really different and also difficult for the first time to talk, talking English for like two weeks. But I think that shaped my confidence in talking, because I feel that many Chinese students are shy so they don't raise their hand to answer questions during the class. So, uh, yeah. And I try to be the first one. And I think, during the communication ... with the other students from say Brazil or from, U.S. or something from a little bit from, from U.K. maybe or from France. Uh, there, there, there are some like cultural background differences, so, so the communication might not be that smooth, but that's, that's still, I get a chance to talk with them and to learn that what they are focusing on and what their educational goals are.

Likewise, Kiara credits her English education as being one of the things that helped her succeed academically at UCLA:

So my, like general conversational English is like pretty good, like I can like talk to my professors and like they can understand me. Um, and then like writing, I took IB English, so it's a pretty high standard of English. So I can like write stuff pretty well and like very aware of like how essays and stuff need to be. But I think for a lot of [other international students], like especially if like you can't speak it that well, it's even harder to write it that well because like for me, like I'm speaking it in my head when I write. So I think that's a big problem for [other international students]. Like I don't think they struggled with the math and like all of that stuff, it's the same everywhere. So I think that's one of the biggest problems.

Having English instruction and English courses helped to build participants' confidence in their ability to communicate socially and academically. These experiences helped them build a

network of friends through being more comfortable communicating with U.S. students.

Similarly, this advantaged them academically through giving them the ability to understand lectures and the confidence to speak up in class when they had questions.

Teachers from Western nations

In addition to conducting instruction entirely in English or having required English courses, the international schools or international tracks in which students were enrolled frequently utilized teachers from English speaking countries (e.g., from the U.S., Canada, South Africa, etc.). This could range from having just one teacher from an English-speaking country to having almost all of the teaching staff come from a Western Nation as was the case for Hui whose education in China mirrored that of schools in Canada. “It's a[n] Alberta curriculum school. So it's basically a Canadian school. So all the teachers, 99 percent of the teachers, are from Canada and then some of them are from like Australia.” Schools using teachers from Western nations exposed students to instructors who utilized more colloquial English than would be found in most textbooks as well as presented these students with firsthand experience with Western approaches to teaching. For example, Zhi’s school brought English teachers from the U.S. to lead English courses:

Yeah. So, during my secondary school we have English teachers from the U.S. to give us oral lessons... You get [to] see the difference between Chinese and English teachers teaching style. [Teachers from the U.S.] they're very relaxed. Sometimes they just sit on table and lecture you. You will never see that in the Chinese classroom, you know, so it's very new experience, I sort of felt how nice and kind professor how approachable they are.

Interactions with teachers from the U.S. or other Western nations not only afforded international students with the chance to learn English from a native speaker, but they also exposed students to U.S. approaches to education, thus giving students an introduction to the education style they would encounter at UCLA.

Teachers from Western nations were not just limited to focusing on helping students with English language acquisition, but also addressed cultural differences as Jing explained:

And they have class once a week that they have sort of a culture, language classes with those teachers. Some of them are New Zealanders, and some of them are I think immigrants from South Africa. And there's teachers from Europe. I would say it's pretty diverse.

The use of teachers from Western nations at international schools not only improved the English language skills of participants, but also granted participants with an introduction to the U.S. style of education. This exposure to a variety of pedagogies prepared participants to more readily adapt to academic life at UCLA.

Downside of international schools and international tracks

Although many participants indicated that through attending international schools or regular schools with an international track they were able to acquire a unique form of capital that equipped them to navigate both the academic and social aspects of UCLA, these types of curricula were not perfect. Two Chinese participants expressed that the programs they attended promised more to students and their families than what could be delivered. For example, Feng explained that the international track at her high school was better at preparing her to take college entrance exams rather than enabling her to succeed at UCLA:

And then I went to my high school and I went to the international class... it was the first year so they just established the international class in my school so it was pretty new and ...'cause it's so new that they don't really do that well in terms of preparing students for studying abroad and also like providing resources to students. But they did prepare me for, you know, like a test and also improve my English.

This criticism was echoed by Nian that the international high school she attended promised that it could help prepare students to study in the U.S., but ultimately was not able to deliver its advertised benefits:

Well [my international high school offers] classes that parents think by their description will prepare them well, but they actually don't, because, when before they actually take the American culture class offered by American teachers, they don't really have the language ability that's able to like communicate correctly like in a classroom of like 35 students, like only two students would answer questions given by the teacher. And the teachers are like, um one teacher, he was from Nigeria, he has a Ph.D. in United States is teaching science class. Yeah. Only me and another student in our class would understand what he's talking about... [A]nd then even if it is American teacher teaching, most students do not necessarily understand. So literally half of the class time we used to like... "Why do you guys not answer my question?"

Even though many students were able to benefit from having attended schools with an international focus, they were not necessarily designed in a way that would allow them to achieve their goals. While this was an issue brought up by two Chinese students, no Indian student in this study mentioned that the international schools they attended were unable to prepare them to study in the U.S. This gap was likely due to two reasons: First, public education in India uses English as its language of instruction, so these students do not have the problem that. Second, international schools attended by Indian participants in this study were all located in major metropolitan regions (e.g., Singapore, New Delhi, etc.) where they drew students from an upper socioeconomic status. This selection factor likely means that the international schools Indian participants attended were educating students that arrived to these schools with a great deal of cultural, social, and mobility capital to begin with that these schools could build upon.

Findings Related to International Student Support Networks

International students coming to study in the U.S. not only brought with them background experiences that they drew upon to succeed academically and socially, but also were utilized a support network that traverses national borders to aid them during their studies. As the number of individuals from China and India choosing to earn a degree in the U.S. has increased over the past two decades, an enormous network of individuals with experience adapting to life in the U.S. has been established that international students at UCLA can tap into. This section first explores how previous experiences developed within students a worldview that is sandwiched between the culture of where they were born and the cultures they were exposed to while growing up, thus altering the types of individuals who they look to establish as part of their support network. It then explores elements of international students' support network that span across national borders including other international students at UCLA, family back home, family in the U.S., family connections in the U.S., and personal acquaintances of participants who have similarly chosen to earn a degree at a foreign university.

“Sandwiched” Worldview of International Students

The variety of global and cross-cultural experiences that participants had before they came to UCLA altered their worldviews and how they understand their time in the U.S. For almost all participants, both Chinese and Indian, the formative experiences that they had living or studying abroad, relocating to culturally disparate parts of their country of citizenship, or living in a global city have altered the way they view themselves and how they identify. While they view themselves as members of the country they were from, this view was tinged with an international perspective due to their cross-cultural experiences. Participants viewed themselves as having an identity that was “sandwiched” between where they were born and the various

cultures they were exposed to throughout their lives. For example, Nian explains that although she would like to return to China after earning her degree from UCLA, her worldview cannot be reduced to just being Chinese. “I think I'm Chinese, like my identity is pretty clear. But, I want to be like Chinese with international perspective and I currently do not have any thoughts about migration. Or like yeah, Citizenship.” Zhi similarly echoes this sentiment:

I feel like I'm kind of in between. I have a lot of good Chinese friends, I have some U.S. friends, but I feel I am someone in between because I have spent some amount of time in the U.S. [but] I also grew up in China. So I feel like I am kind of sandwiched between them...

She goes on to explain that she feels culturally different from some of her Chinese peers who have not had her background experiences:

I sort of felt there was gap, there was already gap between my Chinese friends and me. I didn't think there will be a gap for me and my Chinese friends and U.S. Sometimes I feel gap between me and my friends back home and I think that that's normal because ...[I] had different education background and stuff.

Having spent time living and studying in Philadelphia altered the way that Zhi views herself and relates to the greater Chinese community. However, this does not mean that she now views herself as being at home in the U.S.

But then I was like, I kind of also felt I also belong [in the U.S.] I feel there's [a] gap between me and my American friends of course, because they grew up here. They normally know all American pop culture and I feel there's a gap. So I kind of sandwiched in between. Sometimes when my Chinese friends we're talking about something I feel, I feel like I don't really want to join because I have really different opinions from them.

This sentiment was similarly found in Indian students, particularly those who had spent time living in Singapore. For example, Prisha struggles with responding to friends and colleagues asking where she was originally from due to her having lived throughout the world. “Whenever someone says, ‘Where are you from?’ I'm very confused. I'm Indian, but I'm from Singapore.” This bifurcated identity was similarly shared by Ananya who has lived in India,

Singapore, Indonesia, and the U.S. throughout her childhood. All of this has altered how she identifies:

I feel like my answer to this question usually depends on my choices that someone puts in front of me. If it's like, "Oh were you Indian or American or Singaporean or Indonesian?" I would just reach for Indian. I do very much identify with being Indian. I always keep that as my primary identity, no matter. I feel like everything else is just a layer on top. Like I am Indian. I do have to explain to people sometimes if ... Oh you don't sound Indian. Oh you don't speak Indian. Well, yeah.

Likewise, Kiara who is an Indian international student raised in Singapore explains:

I like to say I'm Indian but I'm from Singapore and then if people dig in more I'm like, but I still hung out with Indians in Singapore but they were not like *Indian* Indian. So it was like you get this like weird cultural mix. Yeah maybe. I wouldn't say I am from anywhere. Like I don't know, it's like, because I'm still in touch with my Indian culture, like I'm very into that stuff. But yeah, I don't know, it's like, yeah, it's weird.

Growing up in different countries has resulted in these students having developed a worldview still connected to the place they were from, but that is simultaneously international in nature.

This perspective was developed before the students arrived at UCLA, and altered who international students chose to connect to based on shared views.

On-Campus Network

How international students view themselves and their time in the U.S. alters the type of support that they need to be successful socially and academically, and further has an effect on the types of communities, social groups, and networks who can potentially support international students. This results in international students looking to on-campus support from other students who share a similar mindset, which primarily draws them to making friends with other international students, Asian American students, or U.S. students who have experienced life outside of the U.S.

Both Indian and Chinese international students reported that they were able to connect better to individuals who had life experiences that enabled them to develop a more global

worldview. For example, Li explained that she feels she has been unable to create bonds with students who had never experienced life outside of the small corner of the world in which they were born:

So I feel like, I feel like the friends, the people who I have least connection with are local Californians who have never been out of the states. So yeah, I have friends who are U.S. citizens who are like from other states, or like, if they're from California, they traveled to Germany or like some other places like for fun. Yeah. But then only those kinds who grew up in L.A. and always stay in L.A. never traveled outside the states, like I just cannot be friends with them. Like I tried but it doesn't work out. Because they feel like California is the whole world, you know? Like, which is not true. And then I'm like, because their worldview is so drastically different it's just hard to have conversations.

The fact that students were born and raised in California or the U.S. in general was not why Li does not form connections with these students. Instead, it was due to many U.S. students, particularly those from California, never having been anywhere else in the world. This lack of cross-cultural experience normalizes only the culture in which these U.S. students were socialized, making it difficult for them to connect with a student who was not only from China, but had also experienced a variety of other cultures throughout her life. Diya, a female Indian student, similarly shared this sentiment that the myopic worldview of U.S. students made these students unappealing as friends since international students tend to be “more in tune with what's happening in the world outside America.” She went on to describe the difference between international students and U.S. students by saying, “Yeah, sorry like I would say [international students] are all more global citizens than any American... like that's a sweeping generalization [that] I feel I can make.”

The narrow worldview of U.S. students was further pointed out by Kiara in describing her interactions with U.S. students who were oblivious about the rest of the world:

I've met so many people here that are just isolated to like where they're from. So I met this guy at a dining hall once... and he was like, “Oh where are you from?” I was like, yeah I'm Indian, but I'm from Singapore. He's like, “Oh how far is Singapore from

India?” I was like, “Maybe like a three-hour plane journey or something.” And he was like, “Yeah, but by car?” And I was just like, “Uhhhhh like there's like a sea.” So I think just being so much more aware of the rest of the world and not thinking that like the U.S. is the only place and like the best place in the world. I think people here can be pretty insensitive like when it comes to talking about other cultures, like I had so many people ask me, “Oh why's your English so good?”

U.S. students who have never traveled outside of their country of citizenship can have outdated stereotypical views of other nations and people, further exacerbating a view that the U.S. and its culture is the epitome of global culture. It was not just a lack of cultural knowledge that made U.S. students unlikely friends for international students. Often students from the U.S. were not as able or willing to critically assess their own country, which made it difficult for participants to connect with their U.S. peers. Being exposed to different cultures and countries aided participants, like Kiara, in being able to assess countries in a more objective way than what their U.S. peers were capable of:

Like we see the flaws. Like I see the flaws of Singapore, I see the flaws in India. Like, just being able to view that objective rather than being super emotional about where you are from. I definitely don't think the U.S. is like an amazing country...

There are other developed countries outside of the U.S. and I would say that to [Americans]. Like in my view, Singapore is way more developed than the U.S. In terms of like, you know, education and cleanliness and like crime and all that stuff. It's a little disappointing because I think when you come into this country from another place you have all these high expectations and then it's like meh. There are some people that satisfied [with the U.S]. But like the large majority of them are just unaware of the rest of the world.

The inability of U.S. students to critically examine their own culture can alienate international students that have seen more of the world and embraced cultures and ideas beyond what has originated in the U.S. This difference can result in international students not looking to U.S. students as sources of support since they cannot relate to the international student experience.

This cultural difference between many U.S. students, especially students from California, was identified by participants in this study as one of the reasons why they did not try to connect with these students. Rather, international students who participated in this study opted to seek out classmates who had similar cultural experiences to themselves that instilled in these classmates a more global worldview. Kiara goes on to explain that:

I think my main friends are still Indian expats, which is very interesting. Like two of them are from Singapore. Yeah. But ... I do have a lot of friends that are outside of my culture where I'm from and I do like we get along really well and stuff. But I think when it comes down to like being like a really good friend like that, like cultural sharing thing is something that's important to me and like, which makes it a lot easier to be good friends, because [we] understand each other. So like my main group is still like my brown friends. I think I've been pretty good in like trying to branch out and like I met a lot of people through like the business community as well. And it's pretty diverse.

International students may not be shunning interaction with U.S. students or with students who have cultural differences from themselves. Instead, some international students sought to connect with students who had a similar mindset and experiences as themselves just as any other student, international or otherwise, may seek to do.

Participants were more readily able to build a network of friends that shared their worldview through becoming friends with other international students or with second or third generation Asian-American students at UCLA who had similar cultural backgrounds. For example, Ananya attended high school in the U.S., but even she was drawn to making friends with other international students or Indian American students:

I would say a lot of [my friends] are Indian American students. Which I didn't expect going in. There weren't that many Indian people at my high school [in Virginia]. Yeah. Even though there were some schools there where you would find a huge population of Indian students, but my high school just didn't happen to have any. I was probably one of four. Yeah. So I was very excited in the beginning at this entire prospect of meeting so many Indian people, because I had been so out of touch in my head. I was like, "Wow this is gonna be fun." Now most of my friends are Indian, either international or from here.

Kiara, also a female student from India, explained that some of her closest friends at UCLA were either from India or what she called American Born Confused Desi (ABCD). The term ABCD was used by Kiara and several other Indian participants to describe second or third generation Desi American students where Desi is in reference to individuals from the greater Indian subcontinent. To participants, ABCDs share many aspects of their culture since the parents or grandparents of ABCDs migrated from the Indian subcontinent and transmitted the traditions of their country of origin to their children or grandchildren who were born in the U.S. But participants still view ABCDs as slightly different from them since ABCDs were raised in the U.S. This generational status can create a “confusion” in how ABCDs identify as they were pulled in different cultural directions by the “Desi” and “American” sides of their identity. Kiara was able to connect with these students through the Indian Student Union (ISU), a student organization for both Indian international students and Indian American students whose website states that it serves as, “liaison at UCLA for exposure to and involvement in South Asian cultural, social, educational, and community service activities”. Document analysis of ISU’s website and affiliated social media pages show that it is open to U.S. and international students, with individuals from both of these student populations in positions of leadership. In explaining the ISU and how it helped her connect with students, Kiara said:

Obviously like there's less pressure from ISU it's kind of more fun. Most of the people in ISU, they're not like international Indians. A lot of them are Indians from America. ABCDs. I don't know if you've heard that. So that's fun because my, like one of my closest friends here, she's the president so that's super fun.

She participates in other clubs, primarily business clubs, but they do not offer her the same type of emotional support that she can receive from her Indian and Indian American friends from ISU:

It's a way for me to really, like meet... like the business community isn't very dominant with Indians. Like there are some, like there's definitely a fair share, but [ISU] is a nice way for me to like meet others. Um, [at ISU we] mostly do like social events, so it's pretty fun. It's like my kind of like stress relief. Like we will always have a good time at meetings and stuff.

While Kiara had friends who were not Indian or Indian American, it was the friends who shared her Indian culture or background who were able to help her find stress relief and to recharge.

Chinese participants similarly expressed that they were more likely to be friends with those who share their culture and background because they have more in common. Chinese participants were more likely to be friends with Chinese international students or second or third generation Chinese American students who they similarly referred to as American Born Chinese (ABC). However, the primary student group Chinese participants utilized, the Chinese Student and Scholar Association (CSSA), was not geared towards U.S. and international students. Instead, the CSSA serves as “the official Chinese student organization of UCLA, dedicated to serving UCLA's broad student community” through organizing programs and providing services geared towards helping Chinese international students (e.g., job fairs that bring recruiters from Chinese companies, providing shuttle services between Los Angeles International Airport and UCLA’s campus). Because of the goal of the CSSA, Chinese participants in this study did not use this student group to get connected to Chinese American students. Instead, they looked to other groups or activities to help them connect to Chinese American students. For example, Hui decided to make an effort to step outside of her comfort zone and try to make friends with U.S. students when she first arrived at UCLA:

I was aiming [to make friends with] local students when I first came here. So my language skills were okay and um, and then I had like an open mind and because I had friends from other countries when I was in high school. So that prepared me a bit. I even went to like a rush event [for a sorority].

Hui went on to explain that she purposefully went to a rush event not for just an Asian sorority, but a generic sorority for the express purpose of trying to make friends with those who were different from her:

I think because you know, like when I first came here I felt like I don't just want to make friends with only Chinese... I wanted to make friends with like people from other parts of the world. And then especially because, you know, you want to have something to talk about when you go back [to China]. Yeah. So I went to the rush info session. And there were like a ton of sororities in the front and they talked about the process [of rushing a sorority]. You would basically need to spend your whole week with them after school. You go to their events and then you talk to everyone. If you make a great impression then they will select you [to make a bid to join]. And everyone was like blond and dressed in white. And I was standing in the back [at this event and] I was like "Okay where am I!" This is weird. That's why I chose to check out an Asian American [sorority]. I saw like an Asian American sorority on Bruin Walk and they were passing out flyers. I decided to go to a recruitment dinner they were holding because um, it looked more friendly. It's more like, oh, we're trying to make friends. And then the sisters look more friendly. [The recruitment event] it was basically a dinner night and they invited their brother fraternity to come. And there was like a dancing at the end.

Despite feeling less out of place around Asian American sorority compared to the homogenous group she encountered with a traditional sorority, Hui still struggled to feel at home with this group due to her aversion to partying:

I don't know, like it was too fast paced for me it was like intense conversation with everyone. I don't know if all Chinese have this sense but like it's kind of hard for me to get into the partying environment because it requires you to be hyper all the time. I needed to basically change emotion to a really hyper state in order to catch up with them. So like making them think that you are one of them.

This aversion to partying was a further commonality among participants for why they opted to seek out friend networks from other international students rather than U.S. students. For example, Wenling felt the type of social network one builds is based on the type of friends that you would like to have and what you are interested in doing. For her, she was more focused on academic and career issues rather than partying:

I feel it really depends on what kind of friends you want, 'cause I'm not like super clubbing person, so I don't wanna know where the parties and clubs [are at], so I don't

really hang out with those partying people. But I do meet a lot of people who like studying. Also some accounting people, 'cause we're in the same [student] club and we're recruited for accounting... I [also] work volunteering in this club, we prepare tax for low-income people, so I knew a couple of tax nerds...

So there is this group of Chinese people, we have very different students here. So, I know some Chinese people that [are] satisfied with just hanging out with Chinese people around them, and I don't think they're socially incapable. They just don't want to talk to local people. Which is totally fine. But I do know people who want to reach out to make friends with local people and they've kind of failed. But I figure that it was maybe because they don't find the right group. I felt that, because a lot of people still have the stereotypical thinking that if you wanted to make friends with Americans, you have to party, you have to drink, you have to use restricted substance, but not everyone's like that. Like, I'm a pretty much a nerdy person, so I hang out with nerdy people all the time.

So, I know some other friends, they party, and some of them, they do media, they hang out with artists, and some people they are really into politics, so they go into [undergraduate student government], they do elections. So those are just really, I think all of us are misled by the popular image of America, like teenagers, they party, they don't go to school; they don't study; and when you want to be friends with them, gotta be cool. But that's not actually what it is.

Whether it is true that U.S. students were primarily focused on partying or not, there was a perception that international students may have of their U.S. peers that resulted in them not wanting to connect with students from the U.S. Because of this perception that U.S. students have different values than international students, participants in this study did not seek to interact with many students from the U.S. or rely upon U.S. students for support during their studies.

Other international students

Participants not only drew support from U.S. students who possessed a more global worldview, but were also able to draw support from other international students at UCLA, some of who they never met before. This affiliation was primarily through one of two avenues: First, through international student groups who help to ease the transition to UCLA for new international students. And second, through the use of technology such as Facebook or WeChat.

The Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) is a UCLA student group that provides assistance to Chinese international students before and during their time on campus. The website of CSSA provides an extensive primer to life at UCLA written in Mandarin covering topics such as academics at UCLA, visa issues, dining options on campus, advice on choosing a residence hall, what to expect at orientation, immunization requirements, guide to Chinese and Asian food in Los Angeles, and information on flying to the U.S. Wenling encapsulates the experience that many participants had with being supported by the CSSA:

I also have [the] CSSA, which is the Chinese Students and Scholars Association. They have a lot of posts and packets, and they also pick us up from the airport when I first got here. Yeah, so then they have a lot of services to help ... they also helped me to get my first bank account, and my first credit card... It also helped me deal with my [cell phone] all the phone services and payments. So that's very good, that I don't have to figure out everything by myself. Yeah. So, I'm very glad that I had this very supportive Chinese student community over here...I think despite not hanging out with Chinese students a lot, I felt that the CSSA, ... they really help a lot of students, like they host [job] recruiting sessions. They invite a lot of Chinese alumni to talk about their experience, and that really helps students to figure out where to start. And also if they want work back in China, they also host a lot of huge recruiting events with Chinese companies hiring overseas. Yeah, so that helps them a lot.

Student groups, like the CSSA lend logistic support to Chinese students after they have arrived to the U.S. to help them set up the things necessary for everyday life in a new country (e.g., help getting to campus from the airport, setting up a cell phone or bank account, etc.). This support is offered to Chinese students who may have never met a single student at UCLA or within the CSSA. After students have settled into life at UCLA, the CSSA continues to support Chinese international students through offering advice to younger students and hosting events, such as recruitment fairs, to help these students transition to life post-graduation.

It was not only through student groups that participants were able to get connected to other international students to obtain assistance. In the same way that technology connected international students to family and friends abroad, technology similarly aided international

students in being connected to a network of other international students at UCLA who were able to help them connect socially and to get information on how to do well academically. Two primary forms of technology were brought up by students. Facebook was cited by Indian students and WeChat was utilized by Chinese students to connect to international students with which they otherwise would have not had contact. While these forms of technology were not the only ones students used—for example WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Instagram were mentioned by students—Facebook and WeChat were identified as the primary means in which participants connected with the UCLA international student network at large.

Arjun, a male student from India, spoke about how he was able to use Facebook to find other Indian students who were in the same entering class as him at UCLA before he moved to Los Angeles. “It was easier than I thought, actually. So I had decided my roommate for freshmen year, before coming, and we just met though Facebook. He was also from India, so we met up once in India.” Ananya was similarly able to use Facebook before she came to UCLA to find another Indian international student to have as a roommate:

There's this Facebook group where you find roommates. People put their spiels, where they're from, what they're looking for type of thing... And then you just message people if you see that your preferences match or whatever. One of my roommates from freshman year had messaged me and then we just started texting about what bed do you want and all that stuff.

Using technology to connect with other international students before arriving on campus was not just done by Indian participants, but was also a common theme that arose during discussions with Chinese participants. After she was accepted to UCLA, Jing used WeChat to find roommates who shared her background:

So, [I was] looking for a roommate, so [I] posted stuff on WeChat... It's like you post something. There's a function called Moment. It's like Facebook, or like Twitter, where you say something and other people can see. Yeah. Students from China, we tend to find people that share similar cultural background 'cause if you live with people from different

culture ... I'll say there's beneficial definitely from diversity or you learn new stuff. But there's also where there's higher chance for you guys to share a similar, I'll say, living style. In a sense. In most cases, conflicts come up with different living styles.

In addition to posting to WeChat, many Chinese participants expressed that they were part of Chinese student groups on WeChat. The assembling of WeChat groups happens organically, as the network of Chinese international students currently at UCLA or who have been newly admitted to UCLA continuously add new students to the groups. Because of this, many Chinese students at UCLA were connected via WeChat groups with other Chinese students at UCLA with whom they have never met or interacted. Through these groups, Chinese international students were able to request assistance from other Chinese students with whom they otherwise may have no contact. This connection resulted in students who during their time at UCLA may have never met in person being connected to each other and offering assistance or advice. An explained this process as such:

Chinese international students, well, most of the people I know are just those we accidentally added as contacts on WeChat. I don't really see them in person. I never see most of the people I know from WeChat in person... People would somehow know that you got into UCLA as [class of] 2020 students, and then they would just drag you into this [WeChat] group with 500 other students. And you're like, "Okay, yeah, accept, accept, accept."

Nian explained that she was able to tap into this network of other Chinese students for even mundane assistance. If she needed help with writing a paper or getting advice she would, "Just send out WeChat moment somebody will answer." In explaining WeChat moments, she described them as, "So [in] WeChat we have like private contacts, like Messenger, but we also have a wall, like Facebook timeline. So it was just posting on it." Wenling also used WeChat to find her roommates. She explained the ease of using the platform to connect to other Chinese students her age due to the ubiquity of the phone app:

Whenever we have problem, they have this post ... there is a talking portion like WhatsApp, and they also have the posting portion like Facebook. So when I have problems, I just post, I say, "Hey, I need help." And my friends, when they see it ... my WeChat friends ... they gonna say, "Oh, I have this resource that can help you." So, it's amazingly helpful.

Utilizing WeChat to get help with academics was not an uncommon occurrence for Chinese participants. For example, Feng described WeChat as a place to get guidance on which classes to take:

Chinese students we have like WeChat and sometimes they will have like a group chat for a specific class... I know like at the beginning of quarter they will ask, "Is anyone taking this class?" in a group chat. "Anyone taking this or that?" And if there are many people taking the same class, they will set up a group chat and then they will join.

There's like a WeChat group for UCLA class of 2020. There are like 300 or 500 members but some of the students are from older classes, like the class of 2019. So not all of them are 2020, but many of them are there so you can find some resources there. So yeah, it's a helpful place if you have some questions and you don't know how to solve them.

Having a ready network of peers that Chinese students can reach out to for advice via platforms like WeChat provides them with a powerful network that can be used to navigate the academic system of UCLA.

Off-Campus Network

Participants did not rely upon a support network located solely on their campus. Instead, they were able to utilize an off-campus support network that spanned the globe both before and during their studies at UCLA. However, international students who participated in this study did not utilize common support systems that typical migrants look to for assistance. They overwhelmingly did not draw support from the government of their sending country or the greater migrant community despite living in Los Angeles, a city with sizeable diaspora populations from both greater China and India. Participants did not forge friendships with international students attending a postsecondary institution other than UCLA in the Los Angeles

area. However, participants did indicate that they garnered support from both family and family friends in the U.S., their own personal friends in the U.S., and family back home.

Government of sending country

Participants in this study were asked to complete a brief pre-screening survey to verify their eligibility to participate in this study. This pre-screening survey included a question pertaining to the sources of financial support available to them to ascertain how they were funding their program of study. Of the 21 individuals who were interviewed in this study, not a single one was receiving financial support from the government of their sending country. This status was true for both Indian and Chinese students, male and female students, as well as across socioeconomic statuses. Instead, participants overwhelmingly funded their education via loans, parents' savings, or the savings of their extended family. This lack of financial support from participants' sending countries meant that these students had little interaction with the government of their sending country throughout their degree programs. Additionally, document analysis of websites for the Indian and Chinese Consulates did not reveal any programs or services offered by these governments to help international students studying in the U.S. Further, none of the websites for Indian or Chinese international student groups at UCLA provided any guidance on obtaining support from their sending countries or even provided links to the websites of their consulates.

When asked if they received any support from their country of citizenship, the more muted participants merely indicated "No," while others derisively laughed. For example, Ying in responding to whether or not she received any support from her government chortled "Haha! My home government doesn't help at all hahaha." Furthermore, when participants were asked open-ended questions regarding from which groups and organizations they drew support, their home

government never once was mentioned. Participants saying that they did not get support from their government the way other migrants might was likely a result of their degree programs only being for four to six years making it so international students did not need consulate services from their home government the way a long-term migrant might need after being in the U.S. for over a decade (e.g., to renew their passport, to get access to legal documents such as birth certificates, to participate in overseas voting, etc.).

Greater migrant community

International students who chose to be interviewed for this study overwhelmingly did not look to individuals that did not have a prior connection to the greater migrant community as a source of support. While UCLA is located in one of the most diverse cities in the world with sizeable migrant populations from both China and India, the greater migrant community was never once mentioned as a motivator for why participants opted to come to UCLA. Instead, nearly every student interviewed in this study expressed two primary motivators for coming to UCLA: institutional rankings and weather. For example, in responding to why she chose to come to UCLA, Zhi, a student from China, spoke of UCLA's high ranking and the weather in Southern California as a reason for choosing to study here:

So I applied to a bunch of schools both in the East Coast and on the West Coast. I did my high school in Philadelphia and I didn't have [a] great experience with the weather. It was terribly cold the two years out there. There was snowstorms and power outage. It was miserable. So, when I applied I have an inclination to go to school on the West Coast, yeah because of the weather and also at that time UCLA was already a very good public school and I just felt because I like to have different experience. ...So I like to have that different kind of experience. So I just decided I can do my undergrad here.

Similarly, Arjun who is a male student from India indicated that he opted to come to UCLA due to it being a globally-ranked university and the weather in Los Angeles:

Ranking was one choice, the location, the weather conditions [was the other]. Because coming from India I wanted to have good weather. Yeah, and that was a big decision,

'cause I know friends who are in Pennsylvania, and other places, it's hard. Getting suited to the environment is very difficult.

For participants in this study, the greater migrant community was never once an issue that was brought up for why they have chosen to come to UCLA. Instead, warm weather and superior rankings were the prime motivators for choosing one school over another. When schools were relatively competitive in global rankings (e.g., UCLA compared to the University of Virginia or NYU) both Indian and Chinese students opted to come to UCLA due to the warm weather, and not because of the migrant community in Los Angeles.

Only one student in this study, Daiyu, interacted with people from the migrant community at large in Los Angeles with whom she did not have previous contact. Daiyu, expressed that she did not feel a connection to the Chinese community in Los Angeles due to the majority of this population being Cantonese speakers while she primarily spoke Mandarin. Before coming to UCLA she attended a local community college where she participated in a program that worked directly with the Chinese population living in Los Angeles. Despite having a school event that was meant to help connect her with this population, she struggled to do so because of cultural differences:

Most of the Chinese immigrants right now in L.A... they speak Cantonese or they love different types of food than me. So I can connect with them in some ways, like the general culture... But still in some way there's a gap between our routine or our preferences. But I still appreciate those kind of opportunities and I can feel accepted in the community. They are very nice but sometimes I can feel like some disconnected in some way, especially when it talks about some value, or thoughts, or future pathways, it can be sometimes I didn't feel that very connected with them.

Daiyu had a general connection to this community because of their somewhat shared heritage, but ultimately had too much of a disconnect due to their cultural differences which prevented her from being able to draw support from this group. After transferring to UCLA and

no longer being a part of this program that was organized by her community college, she no longer was in contact with the Chinese community in Los Angeles.

Beyond this one participant, international students in this study did not mention interacting with other migrants who were family, whether first generation or beyond, who live in the greater Los Angeles area.

International students at other colleges and universities

It was not only cultural differences that prevented participants from engaging with the greater migrant community. Both Chinese and Indian participants indicated that they have limited to no interaction with international students attending other colleges or universities in Los Angeles. This disconnect was despite the fact that these students were the same age, share a similar culture, and were going through a similar life experience of studying in the U.S. on a student visa. In responding to whether or not she had any friends from outside of UCLA, Arjun indicated “Not really, I just mostly [have] friends at school” and Saanvi merely replied, “Yeah, main group was on-campus. I'm trying to remember if I met somebody outside. Yeah, I couldn't think so.” Of those who did make friends with non-UCLA students, these were almost always made through UCLA friends, and these friends from other schools in Los Angeles were only marginal friends. Diya in responding to whether she had any friends from outside of UCLA responded that her friends are, “Mostly UCLA community. Yeah mostly UCLA community. Even if they are working in Los Angeles, I came to know them through UCLA, so yeah.” Kiara provided an explanation for why she does not stay connected with other students in the Los Angeles area that she may have met through friends or through working explaining:

For sure, like the people outside of UCLA that I have interacted with are probably at companies I've interviewed at or companies that have done like info sessions for like all that jazz. So yeah, I'm definitely, definitely plays a part. Um, yeah. And it's just hard to

be like if I do meet someone outside of UCLA, like when are we gonna see them again. So that's hard too.

Despite similarities to international students at other colleges and universities in the Los Angeles area, participants did not rely on these students for support. The only connections that participants had with international students at other institutions of higher education were a result of meeting these students through mutual friends or via work. However, these connections were all temporary and were not ones that participants used to draw support from during their time at UCLA.

Family in the U.S.

Although participants did not look to support from previous migrants with whom they did not have a prior relation or with international students at other postsecondary schools, this does not mean that they did not have a pre-existing network of contacts in the U.S. that they could rely on for support. Almost all participants have family members who previously migrated to the U.S. who they could look to for support. These family members range from older siblings, aunts or uncles, cousins, as well as honorific aunts or uncles (i.e., close family friends who are not blood related to the student). These family members living in the U.S. were able to help bridge the gap between life outside and inside the U.S. since they had lived and often attended school in both locations. Such a network was able to offer special insights for international students that aided them before and during their degree program.

Participants did not wait until they arrived at UCLA to reach out to their network of family members in the U.S. to gain advice on attending a U.S. university. Wenling, for example, has family members in the U.S. who were able to advise her on life in the U.S. as well as give her assistance with her application:

My dad's side of the family, most of them are [in the U.S.], my dad has two brothers, they're both on the East Coast, and he has two cousins. One of them is in California, she's a professor at Stanford, and the other one is in Seattle ... With the brothers in the East Coast, I've met them much more than I had with those cousins who are over here. But when I decided to come to America, and when I was traveling as a freshman to California for the first time to start college, I was on the East Coast for about a month. Just meeting those relatives, just gearing up for UCLA, doing all kinds of things, I spoke with these people extensively, even when I was putting in my applications, because they all had children who went through this process, they went through it when they were my age, and also just living in America, you understand the system better.

So I remember I sent all of my college essays to them for proofreading and critiquing. I spoke to them about their feedback on what they thought about the colleges which I was applying to. Just also asked them if there was anything in particular which I need to be careful of, worried of. I didn't know if UCLA was a quarter system school until I was informed by one of these relatives... I would say I have high contact with about five to ten relatives who are currently here.

Wenling was able to utilize her network of family members to learn about the process of how to apply for college as well as what it would be like to study at a university like UCLA. Jing similarly had a cousin who graduated from a U.S. university who she was able to speak to before she even began applying to higher education institutions in the U.S.:

One of my cousins studied at NYU. She graduated already. That's the only [family member living in the U.S.]... I was expected to go to NYU, so I actually applied early decision, but I got rejected. [I was able to get] a general sense of study in the U.S., probably just from normal conversation with my cousin.

In responding to what types of advice she was able to get from speaking to her cousin who had graduated from NYU, Jing said, "It's class enrollment, major choice, career path. Things like that." Arjun similarly had cousins who attended a U.S. university and reached out to them for advice before coming to UCLA:

My cousins live in San Francisco. They work in the tech industry. They had told me about how the system works, giving me some suggestions [about] [g]etting jobs, how the school works, how it is different from India. How I would have to adjust.

In India we don't do jobs in undergrad, you don't work at restaurants. That's considered low-pay jobs. So that was the one thing they told me, that nothing is considered small. So, as soon as you get to the U.S. you should try looking for a job, as small as possible,

so you can earn enough for your pocket money. So I found a job at [one of the dining halls]. So I worked there for over a year. So that was good. So yeah, advice on just getting adjusted to life in the U.S. That sort of thing.

The benefit of being able to speak to family members living in the U.S. was further corroborated by An who was aided by speaking to her aunt and uncle living in Pasadena before coming to the U.S.:

Yeah, I talked with them, I would say pretty frequently, because I didn't really know who else I can contact to ask about life in the U.S. Like what does it feel to live here, or stuff like that. I think they helped me a lot. They would just tell you the small things that maybe some other people cannot always 'cause we are family members, so we know each other a lot, so they're telling me a lot of that.

Through having a network of family members who have already studied at the collegiate level in the U.S., participants were able to get advice on how the higher education system in the U.S. differs from the system in the country in which they grew up. This advice helped these students to gain a general sense of the education system as well as cultural norms of U.S. universities that differ from where they grew up.

After arriving to the U.S., international students were able to continue to use their network of family members living in the U.S. to gain advice or support. After arriving to the U.S. the summer before her first year at UCLA, Diya was able to obtain guidance from individuals she was not directly related to, but were still considered family:

I have a lot of family in the US and specifically in California. I have family in San Diego and San Francisco and in L.A.... [L]ike Indians, we believe those standards of what counts as a family like if they've been our friends for a while, yeah they are family now. One of them, I think the closest relative in California is my mom's cousin's sister, like young cousin sister and obviously we lived with them for a bit between the orientation and the beginning of school. Yeah, it worked out well and ... in case I have any difficulties adapting or anything whatsoever, I think I know they are always there.

The experience of staying with family members the summer before the first day of class was shared by Yu who has an aunt and uncle who live in the Bay Area:

When I first came to the U.S. I stayed at their place for a few days. And then they helped me to actually move my stuff. They drove me down from the Bay Area and helped me to move into the dorm.

Once participants had fully matriculated to UCLA, the frequency of looking to their extended family members in the U.S. typically tapered off. Instead of reaching out to them for advice, they instead relied on family members in the U.S. for a place to stay during academic breaks. This pattern can likely be attributed to the fact that once students arrived to UCLA, they no longer needed general guidance about life in the U.S., but instead specific advice on how to navigate UCLA with which their relatives did not have direct experience.

Family connections in the U.S.

Chinese and Indian international students studying at UCLA do not only benefit from receiving emotional and academic help from their family members, but were also able to utilize these family members' network of contacts living in the U.S. to receive further assistance. Participants in this study repeatedly identified family connections in the U.S. as part of the support system that has helped them succeed academically and socially in the U.S. and at UCLA.

Once participants decided that they wanted to attend a university in the U.S. or specifically accepted an offer of admission from UCLA, their parents sought to identify contacts that they have in the U.S. or the Los Angeles area that could potentially help their child. As Ananya said, once she accepted her offer at UCLA, "My parents made sure to tap into their network and see who else they know [in Los Angeles]." This same sentiment was shared by

Prisha:

[A]fter I decided to come to the U.S., my parents were like, 'Okay, look for every connection we have.' So then, there is someone in that area, or someone in L.A. that if you need something really urgently, or you need an adult supervision for something, then like – Yeah, so my mom called her best friend and turns out my mom's best friend's cousin's sister, very far relation, but, lives in Westwood. So, she lives right off [the

residential halls]. So, which is pretty awesome. So, yeah, that's the only connection we found.

Family members seeking out contacts to support their child during their studies at UCLA was not limited to just Indian international students, but was also a common occurrence for Chinese international students. For example, once An told her parents that she wanted to earn a degree in the U.S., her parents told her that they had already been preparing for this eventuality:

They told me afterwards that they were just waiting for me to decide on my own, so they actually prepared a lot of things themselves. So by the time I told them that, "Okay, maybe I want to go to America and study in the future," they just gave me a bunch of lists of people that I could contact to ask for help and stuff like that.

Family connections in the U.S., no matter how tenuous the connection may be, provide international students with a network of contacts that they can rely on while in the U.S. Both Indian and Chinese international students' parents were able to assemble an assortment of these contacts before their children ever set foot in the U.S.

Participants in this study were able to gain the most from family connections through the logistical support these connections could offer. Internationally relocating without a contact in a receiving country was particularly challenging; however, having family connections in Southern California afforded these students with support to ease their transition to living in the U.S.

Feng's father, for example, has a friend who lives in Los Angeles who was able to assist Feng with the logistics of relocating to UCLA:

When I came here, [my dad's friend] picked me up at the airport and then to take me to the dorm and 'cause I live in dorm, my first and second year during the winter break if we want to stay in the dorm, we need to pay money. ..., my parents' friends allow us to stay in their house or apartment and now I don't need to pay money. Oh. And also my parents came during winter break so we have a place to stay there.

Likewise, Kiara's family connected her to friends they have in the U.S. that were able to help her with the logistics of relocating and to offer her emotional support until she was able to establish her own network on campus:

We have family friends, so my parents got me in touch with them the moment I came here. ... [when I got to the U.S.], I go over a couple of times, they live in Torrance... And then like, [they] got me my phone so I just keep paying them for my phone bill...

[I] kind of like made my friends here and like hang out with them. So like freshman year, Thanksgiving I went to [my parents' friend's] place but then like last year I went to a friend's place... and this year [I'm] going to go to San Diego [with friends].

Family connections in the U.S. were able to offer support that eased participants' transition into the UCLA community. This removed the barrier of having to deal with logistics of moving internationally, thus allowing this group of students to focus their energy on their social and academic integration into the UCLA community instead of on the logistics of moving.

Once classes began, the frequency of interaction participants had with family friends in the U.S. decreased. However, students were still able to reach out to family connections if they began to struggle with their studies as Saanvi explained:

One of my classes ended up being really difficult for me. ... I was like working on it alone most of the time and I'm like everybody else in the class seemed to get what the professor's saying. And I was like, like how would they get [it] so easily? ...I was really struggling in that class... I was like, okay, I'll read the textbook and then I tried to answer the questions. That didn't work out for me. So yeah, I didn't know what to do at that point. And then I call home and then I was telling my dad. So he kind of referred me to a professor in Cornell [who he was friends with].

Saanvi was able to get connected to this family friend in the U.S. Because this family friend was familiar with the U.S. education system through her education and work, she was able to speak to Saanvi and give her advice on how to resolve her dilemma:

[My family friend told me] you should go talk to your undergrad department. So before that I didn't know that they do advising there also. I really loved it. Like I went to Dr. François. She was the physics head. Yeah. So she was so sweet, like she made me feel so much better... This class is like, [when] most juniors also struggled. So it's like uh, she

told me about the wall. Like I think it's like a sophomore wall or a junior wall. Yeah, so you kind of have to jump through it and like work on it with other people and problems. So yeah. So that just made me feel so much better about my major.

Saanvi's parents were able to connect her with faculty at another U.S. university, who in turn helped Saanvi learn about the types of resources that were available to students at U.S. universities that may not be common where she grew up. This connection was able to aid her in understanding how to navigate her time at a U.S. university so she could succeed academically.

Friends from back home in the U.S.

The network that international students were able to rely on for assistance during their time in the U.S. was not limited to family and family friends, either back home or in the U.S. International students were further able to rely on a network of their personal friends that they had from back home who were now living in the U.S. These friends who came to the U.S. as international students before participants in this study were a valuable source of information that have been able to help both Chinese and Indian international students flourish while at UCLA.

Before participants relocated to Los Angeles and started their first day of classes, they were able to seek out guidance from older friends who were already studying in the U.S. to get advice to help ease their transition. For example, Ying had several friends from China that were studying in the U.S. who she was able to look to for advice. When elaborating on the types of feedback she received from these friends, Ying said:

Like what kind of meal plan you should get. Also like what is the best residential building? And like how many classes to take usually, like that kind of questions. Sometimes we'll talk about like what's your rent here? Like have you bought a car yet? Yeah something like that.

Ying was able to connect with friends who were already studying in the U.S. because she had previously met them through her international high school. Most participants in this study either attended an international high school or a regular school that offered an international track

geared toward prepping students to study abroad. Many students who attend high schools with an international focus end up studying in countries throughout the world, including the U.S.

Consequently, participants who attended these schools were connected with alumni who were studying throughout the world who they could reach out to for advice on studying in a foreign country. This network included students studying at UCLA. Aadya explained how when she was struggling with academics at UCLA, she was able to gain assistance from friends she knew from her international high school back home:

So some people from my high school go here also. Yeah. So, I got in touch with some of them. So like they're like, oh, the seniors now... So they were like one year ahead of me in school and like luckily, like that batch had a lot of kids who came to UCLA. There were like three or four of them.

Yeah, but they were really helpful because um just explaining the kind of systems and like some resources which [I was] not aware of. Especially like your first quarter here or like, you know nothing, you know? It was helpful, you know, like what kind of clubs you can join, you know? Especially like one of my friends told me about all the things she learned from [trial and error]. So like she was like, 'Yeah, like I did this [and] this wrong and like don't do this, you know, she was like, Oh yeah, like my first year, like I didn't join any clubs and it's really difficult to get into clubs. Um, because they want like, you know, your experiences from other clubs to apply to these clubs. But I had none.' So, you know, uh, those kinds of kind of personal anecdotes and stuff really helped.

Diya was similarly able to draw on the network from her high school while at UCLA, explaining that when she was not able to get help from UCLA faculty or staff she:

Generally [I get help] from people who have been in the same situation before, so I will find someone like another international student say from India, specifically from Bangalore, maybe even from my high school because a lot of people are here, a lot of people come here as well and yeah I'll speak to them about academic issues or more importantly visa issues because they've been through it.

Akshay similarly credited his network of friends and acquaintances from back home as being one of the reasons he does not struggle academically or socially the way other international students might:

I had a lot of people to guide me, people from my high school who were grades above me but who also came to America to study. They could guide me, just give me small tips on how to prepare, how to transition to these kinds of academics. I had help in guiding me in how to transition in college. I mean mostly [the advice was] simply, like go to office hours... I remember freshman year I don't think I went for any office hours. My sophomore year I started doing it and I realized my participation grade went up. The quality of my work started getting better because I was actually getting proper feedback...

Friends from back home who were living and studying in the U.S. were a valuable resource for participants in this study. These friends were able to provide advice on how to adjust to living in the U.S. as well as information on the resources available on campus. This resulted in participants being able to navigate both the social and academic aspects of life at UCLA.

Family back home

When asked to rank the forms of support that they utilized while at UCLA, nearly all participants listed their family as their most important source of support. Both Indian and Chinese international students stated that their family members back home were able to assist them throughout their time at UCLA. Technological improvements to communications have reduced the geographic and financial barriers to international students being able to remain in contact with their immediate family members outside of the U.S. Technology ranged from video calls (e.g., Skype or FaceTime), inexpensive or free international phone calls, to social media platforms (e.g., WeChat, Snapchat, Facebook, etc.) have enabled international students to remain in close contact with their family back home.

This ease of connectivity makes it so international students could receive support from their family outside the U.S. that ranged from emotional support when students were experiencing psychological struggles to providing academic support by helping answer questions that students had regarding course material. Through contemporary forms of communication participants were able to stay in close or even constant contact with their family outside of the

U.S. Prisha for example explained that, “I talk to my parents every day because if I don't they're going to freak out. So I talk to my parents every day.” While Prisha stated that she was in daily contact with her family back home, most students in this study explained that they talk to their family about once a week. Ishan said that, “Once a week [my parents and I] have an actual FaceTime or something.” Although not as frequent of a connection as Prisha, this was still beneficial to Ishan who said that, “It helps me as well. I'm pretty close to my parents. It's nice to get to see their faces and stuff. Yeah, it also makes them feel better, which also makes me feel [better].”

Almost every participant in this study, regardless of nationality or gender, had frequent calls or video chats with family outside of the U.S.:

Saanvi:

Yeah, [my parents and I] also keep talking like once a week video call or if something like if something new I wanted to tell them like if I'm doing like if like I joined, suppose a club right now, like I joined Bruin Space. So then I'm doing like, I'm studying for some test, then I'll call them up and tell them that yeah, I'm doing this.

An:

Just regular school life, whatever happened in my class, there's this weird classmate or this weird professor. And they would talk about their work, whatever happens in China, stuff like that.

Akshay:

With my parents, I think I speak to them at least once every two or three days otherwise they get worried, and with my friends, it's less frequent, but as much.

In addition to phone calls and video chats, several participants also used various forms of social media to stay connected with their family outside of the U.S. For example, in addition to regular phone calls with her parents, Ananya also keeps in touch with her parents through being connected via Snapchat. In responding to whether or not she was still in contact with her parents, she responded:

Yes, definitely. We definitely do on Snapchat and we FaceTime a lot too. I'm very much in contact with them. I mean both of my parents are on Snapchat. I'm very open about everything I do. I don't actually filter out anything...

Similarly, Yu stays connected with her family through her family's WeChat group in addition to phone and video calls:

So I have a family WeChat group where I have my parents, my grandmother, and my uncle and my aunt. So if I have any problems or just even if I don't have problems, I just send them like pictures I take every day or like stuff I do. And maybe if they see them, they'll comment. Or I'll ask them for advice [they will tell me] if they agree or disagree with my decision on something. So they will have interactions with me.

Having this greater ability to remain connected to family and friends outside of the U.S. has allowed Indian and Chinese students to find both academic and social support from their family despite geographic and time differences. Speaking with parents was repeatedly brought up by students as a means to gain emotional support. For example, Zhi speaks with her parents once a week and provided the following explanation of how this helps her:

I think I get emotional support from them. We'll talk a lot about a lot of stuff. Sometimes [when we're video chatting] I see that they were having dinner. I will be like, oh, I miss food back home. I'm gonna go home this Christmas. Oh, mom you're going to have to cook this and that for me.

New forms of communication and connectivity have made it possible for international students to maintain a connection to their family and receive emotional support from their family during their studies at UCLA. This connectivity provides them with a support system that was not geographically located but instead goes across national borders.

The ease of communicating with family members abroad further contributed to international students being able to succeed academically while at UCLA. When Prisha has been confronted with a problem, her typical response was:

Talking to my mom. Even if she's not giving me advice, I'll just verbalize everything to her and just try to figure it out. For academic struggles, I usually talk to my parents. And

for personal stuff, I'll usually talk to my parents, as well. So, yeah, my parents are my biggest support system. I call them for everything.

Likewise, Chen was able to gain advice from his parents about academics at UCLA since he had a field of study similar to their careers:

So yeah, that's also like finding jobs or that thing they have much to say. And also because they both work. My mom is an accountant [and] my father is an investment banker. So they both work in the financial area, so related to my major... So [I] think academically they can help me a little bit like explaining, explaining basic financial terms. So yeah, that's so awesome. Maybe not very specifically, but I can ask them and they can tell me like what is that about like say bull market or like a kind of market long or short... [Or] how do people make money through the stock or lose money through stocks and some interesting facts like that.

So yeah, that's a great help. Like, yeah, because I think having them, um, who have worked in this area for a long time teach me these kinds of terms is a really good idea. It's better to, this is better than searching on Google, sometimes it's just like you need to select which definition you use because if you look at 10 definitions, which are not exactly the same, correct. You'll get very confused like, 'Oh, what exactly it is,' but if you have them explain to you and how it works, I'm practically in say in Chinese market, I will get a better sense of that. So that's really great.

Being able to remain connected to family back home despite geographic distance provided a support system to international students beyond just what was available to them on campus or in the immediate area surrounding campus. This connection with family abroad supported participants both emotionally and academically.

Participants in this study were able to draw assistance during their studies from a network of contacts that spanned the globe. The network that international students chose to look to for support was altered by participants having a worldview that was sandwiched between the culture of where they were born and the cultures they were exposed to while growing up. Because of this sandwiched worldview, participants sought out support from those both in and outside of the U.S. who shared a similar mindset. This included other international students at UCLA, family

back home, family in the U.S., family connections in the U.S., and personal acquaintances of participants who have similarly chosen to earn a degree at a foreign university.

Unlike previous migrant groups, participants in this study did not draw support from the government of their sending country. Further, participants had little to no contact with individuals who migrated to the U.S. from either China or India unless participants knew them before arriving at UCLA. Although there is a large migrant community from both China and India living in Los Angeles, international students in this study did not have enough in common with these other migrants to forge a connection to them or to look to them for support during their studies.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to understand how international students in the United States utilize various capitals and networks to navigate the U.S. higher education system to succeed academically and socially. Primarily, this study has highlighted the unique forms of mobility capital that Indian and Chinese students cultivate before they come to the U.S. to earn a bachelor's degree, and how this form of capital aids them throughout their degree program. This study further showed that the same prior experiences that help to develop mobility capital in international students also alters how they understand their time in the U.S., thus influencing which individuals and groups they look to for support while in the U.S. Finally, this study has illuminated the transnational support network that these international students were able to rely upon for support during their studies in the U.S. This support network not only extends beyond the confines of the universities where students attend but also transcends national borders. Participants in this study overwhelmingly came from higher socioeconomic statuses which provided them the opportunities to develop additional forms of capital and to have a support network throughout the world.

Discussion

How prior experiences shape who they look to for support

Who international students look to for support during their time at UCLA was influenced by students' prior cross-cultural experiences as well as by the non-traditional migrant identity that they hold. International students coming to UCLA arrive to campus with a wealth of prior experiences that alter the types of individuals and groups that they wish to befriend or look to for support during their studies. Participants in this study, both Indian and Chinese, had three common formative experiences that altered their worldview and with whom they were likely to

associate. First, participants relocated to a new city during their childhoods that was culturally or ethnically distinct from where they grew up (e.g., moving within their country of citizenship from a rural to an urban area, moving to a new country within Asia, or moving to a Western nation). These experiences exposed participants in this study, often at an early age, to divergent cultures that shaped their perspectives. While the experience of relocating within one's own country is unlikely to be universal for all international students, there is reason to believe that this may not be uncommon for Chinese or Indian international students. Given the large geographical size of China and India, different areas of each of these countries are likely to have their own unique culture. The rapid economic growth of both China and India has resulted in numerous families relocating to rapidly growing urban areas where new employment opportunities exist, thus exposing these families to divergent cultures within the borders of their own country.

Second, numerous international students in this study participated in education abroad trips during their secondary educations. These excursions were organized by public schools, private international high schools, and by private organizations that specialized in preparing students to attend a university in the U.S. These trips further exposed international students to cultures that were different from where they grew up which developed in them a perspective that is sandwiched between where they grew up and the places they had travelled which predisposed them to gravitate toward others who share this mindset. Finally, even students who did not participate in education abroad trips or who did not have the luxury of traveling and living throughout the world were still exposed to a vast array of cultures through growing up in global cities (e.g., Shanghai or Mumbai) that contain a variety of different cultures. These experiences

exposed all students in this study to a vast array of cultures, regardless of a student's socioeconomic status, nationality, or ethnicity.

The numerous cross-cultural experiences that participants had during their formative years has altered the way they identify. Both Indian and Chinese students in this study said they had an identity that is sandwiched between multiple cultures. While they do not abandon their national identity, their Indian or Chinese nationality is only a part of their identity. Their experiences being abroad or exposure to other cultures has resulted in their identity not being able to be reduced to just that of their nationality. They feel culturally distinct from their fellow citizens back home due to having an identity formation that has occurred outside of the borders of their nation.

The way international students identify is further complicated due to the uncertainty of their ability to remain in the U.S. While some participants identified as temporary migrants to the U.S. or as having a general willingness to live anywhere in the world, not just in the U.S. or their country of citizenship. This tentative migrant identity stemmed from some students' desire to return to their country of citizenship, having a view of themselves as migrants that does not view migration as a one-time decision, and due to the uncertainty of their ability to obtain either a job in the U.S. or a permanent visa status after graduation.

On-campus support

How international students identify altered who they look to for support and the types of friendships they sought to make while studying in the U.S. Both Indian and Chinese international students reported that they were able to connect better to individuals who have a more global worldview. This typically meant they chose to connect with other international students or U.S. students who have experienced life beyond U.S. borders. Unlike in previous studies where

international students reported that they felt rejected by U.S. students (Lehto, Cai, Fu, Chen, 2014; Zhao, Kuh, Carini, 2005) participants in this study indicated that they purposefully were looking to connect with only students who shared their more cross-cultural mindset.

International students in this study did not believe they failed to socially connect with the community at UCLA if they did not have many U.S. friends since being friends with U.S. students in general was not a goal of theirs. Instead, connecting with international students or U.S. students who had similar priorities and worldviews is how they measured being socially successful. This perspective is not dissimilar to many underrepresented racial minority students attending predominantly White postsecondary institutions who do not aim to interact with White students who hold a worldview that is the complete opposite of their own (Bowman, 2013; Tatum, 2003).

While U.S. colleges and universities may enroll international students with the hope that interaction between international students and U.S. students increases the global competencies of all students (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Miller & Guo, 2013), international students in this study did not share this goal. They instead wanted to associate with likeminded students who already possessed a more global perspective. Further, participants indicated that they often connected with other international students since these individuals were able to provide a network of students who were familiar with navigating life at UCLA as an international student in ways that U.S. students could not (e.g., how to navigate the employment process as a student on an F-1 visa).

Off-campus support

The types of off-campus support that participants looked to differed from other migrants. Unlike other migrant groups who were supported by the government of their sending country

while residing in the U.S. (Fitzgerald, 2008; Lopez, 2015; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003), participants in this study received no support from the government of their sending countries. Similarly, Indian and Chinese students who participated in this study did not look to the greater migrant community in Los Angeles for support, even though there exists large expatriate groups from both China and India in California. This phenomenon runs counter somewhat to how other migrant groups have looked to earlier migrants to provide them with assistance in establishing their lives in the U.S. (Fitzgerald, 2008; Lopez, 2015; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). Cultural differences between international students and the migrant community in the U.S. from China and India was one of the primary reasons that participants did not connect with strangers from the greater migrant community. Even the interaction of participants with international students at other colleges or universities in Southern California were limited, despite their shared experience of being international students in the U.S. The only connection participants had with the migrant community in the U.S. was between international students and their longtime family or friends who now permanently reside in the U.S. However, both Chinese and Indian students in this study primarily connected with these individuals when preparing to come to UCLA and for a short time after they arrived at campus. Once participants established a network on-campus, they mostly ceased to look for support from family or friends from back home that now lived in the U.S.

Mobility capital

International students who participated in this study from both China and India arrived at UCLA with unique forms of capital from which they could draw support to aid them in their studies. Rather than their international student status resulting in them arriving at UCLA with a litany of cultural and academic issues that prevent them from being able to succeed academically

and socially, they instead came to UCLA with a vast range of prior experiences that conferred to them unique forms of capital, primarily mobility capital, that they were able to draw upon to aid them during their time studying in the U.S. Similar to European students attending foreign universities within Europe (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002), Asian international students at UCLA were able to draw upon mobility capital stemming from their previous experiences with mobility and their first experience with adaptation. While these experiences were often similar, the nature of the international travel and types of adaptation that Indian and Chinese students experienced prior to arriving at UCLA were substantively distinctive to those had by Europeans (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002) due to the vast difference in cultural experiences had by the students in this study. Students developed mobility capital through their prior experience with traveling abroad, their first experience with adaptation, and from their previous international education experiences. The latter of these was a unique source of mobility capital that participants and their families purposefully sought to develop.

Previous experience with mobility

Participants in this study were able to draw from their prior experiences with mobility to aid them in navigating their time at UCLA. International travel (e.g., being a tourist, visiting family throughout the world, etc.), moving to a new part of the world (including the U.S.) with their family, and international education trips all provided participants with first-hand experience of being immersed in a new culture. Similar to Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) study of European international students studying in other European countries, Indian and Chinese students were able to gain first-hand experience from these early in life cross-border trips to learn what it was like to be immersed in a new culture and to gain experience with adapting to this new culture.

This adaptation was true for both participants who travelled for vacation as well as for those who relocated for months at a time with their family members.

Participants reported that these experiences lessened their feelings of culture shock when they came to the U.S., easing their transition to studying at UCLA. For students who travelled to English speaking countries, this afforded them the chance to practice their English and allowed them to realize any deficiencies that they may have in their English-speaking abilities so that they were able to work on addressing them before they began their postsecondary studies in the U.S.

While some participants in this study experienced mild cultural differences as a result of traveling throughout Asia, similar to European students in Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) study where participants travelled to other European countries and experienced the need to adapt to a slightly different culture, many participants in this study had the chance to experience substantially different cultures as a result of travelling from Asia to Western nations. Participants in this study differed from their European counterparts due to the vast cultural differences between their home culture and the culture of the countries to which they travelled. International students in this study spent time in countries that differed not only linguistically but also culturally. Participants were from India and China and travelled from not only Eastern to Western nations but also from collectivist to individualistic cultures, whereas in Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) study, participants only travelled to neighboring Western nations that were not as dramatically different in terms of culture. This adaptation stemmed from students traveling from Asia to Europe, Oceania, and North America, and for some students involved living for an extended time in a foreign country with their family. This experience offered an inoculation to the effects of culture shock by exposing students to life in a country that is immensely different from life in their own country.

Students who lived in a foreign country for an extended period of time further learned how to make friends with those who differed culturally, thus preparing them to be able to be socially successful during their studies at UCLA. Finally, the small number of students in this study who lived in the U.S. with their family members during their teenage years were exposed to the U.S. education system, helping them to adjust to living and learning in the U.S. For example, some participants in this study had spent time in U.S. classrooms which they credited with making them feel more comfortable engaging with faculty and teaching assistants in and outside of the classroom.

First experience with adaptation

While not every participant in this study had the opportunity to travel or live abroad, those who did not spend time overseas while growing up still experienced adapting to a new culture prior to coming to UCLA. Similar to Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) original study, first experiences with adaptation included not only traveling to different countries, but also included students adapting to a new culture within the boarder of their countries of citizenship (e.g., a student moving from Inner Mongolia to Shanghai or a student moving from Southern to Northern India). Students who moved to different regions of their own country of citizenship experienced having to adapt to new cultural norms, sometimes language differences, and in the case of a few students, even being treated like a foreigner within their own country. This similarly aided students in learning how to adapt to life in a new culture which helped to lessen the experience of culture shock when coming to UCLA and streamlined their adaptation to life in the U.S.

First experience with adaptation within one's own country was more pronounced for participants in this study compared to the Europeans in Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) original study.

This intra-country adaptation is due to students in this study coming from China or India, each of which has a population over one billion people who come from a wide variety of linguistic and cultural norms. Such drastic cultural differences in a single country are not as achievable in nations such as Ireland or France where Murphy-Lejeune (2002) conducted her study due to their exponentially smaller populations and more homogenous cultures. Students in this study were treated like they had come from a completely different nation despite never having left their own country of citizenship.

Further, some Chinese and Indian students in this study experienced drastic language differences within their own countries (e.g., Cantonese vs. Mandarin used in different parts of China and the 22 different official languages of India). This more extreme version of first experience with adaptation without leaving one's country of citizenship granted participants in this study harsher experiences of adapting to a new culture within the borders of their country of citizenship, which helped them both academically and socially during their time at UCLA. Prior experience with adapting and making friends in a new part of their own country helped students from China and India to be able to again make friends while at UCLA despite cultural differences between their country and the U.S. Further, being more comfortable with adaptation lessened their need to overcome culture shock or other facets of living in a new country so that participants could instead focus on their studies rather than have their time and energy drained by adjusting to a new culture.

International high schools

The majority of students in this study benefitted from a unique form of mobility capital that was not present in Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) study: Secondary education that had an internationally focused curriculum. International high schools, regular public schools with an

international track, the use of Western curricula (e.g., Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes), and international education trips all provided a unique form of mobility capital to participants that aided them during their time at UCLA both socially and academically. The families of both Chinese and Indian students purposely placed their children into education activities that were designed to confer to their students the requisite knowledge and skills to be successful earning a bachelor's degree in a Western nation. These activities included class structures that mirrored those of the U.S., employing teachers from Western nations, having instruction entirely in English, and embarking on trips to U.S. universities during the summer to take courses. All of these experiences exposed international students to the norms of education in the U.S., ameliorating the difficulty that some international students have been found to have as they adjust to the academic norms of U.S. higher education institutions (Abel, 2002; Bista, 2015; Koyama, 2009; Lee, 2014; Ludeman, Osfield, Hidalgo, Oste, Wang, 2009; Tatar, 2005).

Through having instruction in English, these education activities further prepared participants to learn and communicate in English, and in the case of international trips to the U.S., the chance to use colloquial English when interacting with locals. This experience lessened the difficulty that many international students have with English language competency (Koyama, 2009; Stevens, Emil, & Yamashita, 2010). Finally, these internationally-focused, education systems and trips incorporated classrooms where students were expected to speak to teachers or faculty and even attend office hours in the same way they would while at UCLA. These experiences helped participants be more comfortable in the U.S. with asking questions in class, going to office hours for help, and working with staff members when they needed institutional support. These experiences of students in this study were set apart from the international students in prior studies who struggled with connecting with faculty or speaking up in classes either due

to lacking confidence in their English abilities or due to their not being familiar with the academic norms of the U.S. (Koyama, 2009; Stevens, Emil, & Yamashita, 2010).

Transnational social fields

Participants in this study, from both China and India, were able to rely on more than just mobility capital to aid them in being successful academically and socially while at UCLA. International students were further able to draw support from a network of peers that transcended national borders. Similar to other migrant groups in the U.S. (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Schiller & Levitt, 2006; Waldinger, 2015), technological innovations (e.g., high speed internet, video calls, social networks, etc.) and inexpensive international travel have made it so that the international students in this study were able to draw support from a wide variety of individuals and groups that go beyond the confines of UCLA and outside of the borders of the U.S.

Due to technology available to participants, they were able to remain in close communication with family and friends who live outside of the U.S. The forms of communication varied between video calls, phone calls, text messages, social media posts, and flights home for holidays. The variety of means to stay connected with family outside of the U.S. and the ease in which they could be utilized allowed participants to speak with family members weekly, and even daily in the case of a select few participants. This communication removes the barriers that state borders have upon individuals by making the distant local (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Schiller & Levitt, 2006; Waldinger, 2015). This connection helped to lessen feelings of isolation and homesickness among participants, thus removing a common barrier to international students being able to focus on academics that has been frequently identified by prior researchers (Bista, 2015; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002).

Further, family members were able to lend emotional support to lessen any mental anguish that has previously been found among international students (Aubrey, 1991; Dillard & Chisolm, 1983; Kwon, 2009; Mori, 2000). Finally, for many participants, they were able to use the connection to family abroad to seek academic guidance (e.g., information about specific terms, advice on where to look to get assistance with academic problems, etc.) that helped them to succeed academically without needing assistance from their university.

The transnational social network that international students from both China and India were able to draw upon was not limited to those derived from communicating with family members back home. Instead, a social network in the U.S. was able to provide support to many participants in this study before they arrived to the U.S. and after they started at UCLA but had not yet set up a support network on campus. This network consisted of family that have located to the U.S., family connections in the U.S., and friends from back home who now live in the U.S. Once participants decided to study in the U.S., their families sought out contacts not only in Los Angeles, but also throughout the U.S., who could help assist their child while they were at UCLA. These contacts could be individuals the student had never met before (e.g., a family friend) or a close relative (e.g., an aunt or uncle). These connections provided assistance to participants when they were applying to universities in the U.S., advised them on the academic norms of U.S. universities, helped to temporarily house participants the summer before they matriculated at UCLA, helped by storing their belongings in summers, and helped them to move into their residence halls. These connections further provided a social support system that dampened students' feelings of isolation and culture shock as they worked on creating their own network of friends on campus. As time went on and participants established their new lives on campus, the frequency of contact with these family and friends in the U.S. most often decreased.

Because secondary schools with an international focus specifically seek to prepare their student to study in a Western nation, participants who attended such schools often had a further network of friends in grades ahead of them who had already come to the U.S. to earn a bachelor's degree. Having older friends who have already transitioned to living and studying in the U.S. provided participants with an additional network of peers that could instruct them on the social and academic norms of the U.S. Similar to family and family friends in the U.S., these secondary school contacts were utilized by participants before coming to the U.S. for guidance on the U.S. higher education system. After participants arrived on campus, many of these students ceased to communicate with these older students unless they were currently attending UCLA.

While participants in this study did not rely on support from other co-nationals in Southern California or from the government of their sending country like permanent migrants have in the past (Fitzgerald, 2008; Lopez, 2015; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003), they were able to rely on support from other international students at UCLA. Support from other international students was typically derived from international student groups or through electronic social networks (e.g., WeChat), the latter especially for Chinese students. International student groups provided rides from the airport to campus upon arrival, advice to underclassmen about what courses and professors to take, as well as career advice. Online groups via Facebook and WeChat (and other social media) enabled participants to be connected to other international students before they even arrived to campus and then throughout their time at UCLA. This helped students to find roommates with similar cultural values before coming to campus and to gain advice on how to navigate the bureaucracy of UCLA after they arrived.

Implications

The experiences that this study's international students have prior to coming to the United States to earn a bachelor's degree is more varied than what has been identified by prior research. International students do not arrive to U.S. colleges or universities as blank slates with little exposure to Western culture or the educational systems of these countries. Instead, international students—particularly those from higher socioeconomic statuses—purposefully develop mobility capital that they believe will prepare them to do well while attending a college or university in the U.S. Further, international students remain connected to a support network that is not limited by campus or national borders from which they can draw support. This network is able to support international students emotionally and provide some academic guidance. All of this has implications for international students coming to the U.S., international student offices, career centers, and alumni relations.

International students coming to the U.S.

Findings from this study have implications for international students both before they come to the U.S. for their studies as well as after they arrive. International students planning to come to the U.S. to earn a bachelor's degree, particularly those from higher socioeconomic statuses, have a wealth of resources that are available to them as they explore the process to study abroad. Students and their families can look to other family members, family friends, and older classmates who are currently studying in the U.S. to gain knowledge about the entire process of studying in the U.S. This network is able to provide potential international students with advice on how to apply to schools in the U.S., guidance through the college choice process, and information on the differences between the higher education system in a student's own country compared to the U.S. Through gaining this guidance from their network, international

students can lessen any anxiety about studying in a foreign country and ease their transition into the U.S. higher education system.

Individuals planning to study in the U.S. can further prepare themselves to study in the U.S. through participating in experiences that confer to them mobility capital that will aid them in their ability to be academically and socially successful while studying abroad. Attending postsecondary schools with an international focus or even an international track, education abroad trips, and interacting with those from different cultures within one's own country were all activities that conferred mobility capital to students in this study, thus enabling them to be successful both academically and socially while at UCLA. Many of these activities not only provided students with mobility capital, but also introduced them to a network of older students who had already matriculated at U.S. colleges or universities who they could look to for advice before and after starting at UCLA. While these are all avenues to obtain mobility capital, the variability in the quality of these activities make them uncertain means to obtain mobility capital. For example, at least one student in this study indicated that her international high school claimed to prepare its students to study in the U.S., but failed to deliver on this promise due to many students lack of fluency in English necessary to benefit from a school whose language of instruction was English.

Once they arrive at a U.S. institution of higher education, international students have a wealth of resources that are available to them via the international student community at their campus. While the greater migrant community was not one that international students in this study looked to for support, there was a great deal of support available to them from other international students on their campus. International students can find support and guidance via official international student groups as well as through less formal channels such as social media

groups geared toward international students in general or geared toward international students from specific countries. These groups can provide a network of friends to help international students connect socially as well as provide guidance on academics (e.g., what classes to take, which professors are most supportive, etc.).

Implications for secondary education institutions outside the U.S.

Participants in this study repeatedly indicated that they felt attending a secondary school with an international focus prepared them to succeed academically and socially at UCLA. Secondary schools in nations outside the U.S. that have a large number of students planning to earn a bachelor's degree in another country could benefit from adopting practices that are aimed at developing in their students the knowledge and skills needed to do well at a foreign university. Incorporating elements of Western nations' curriculum (e.g., AP classes), English language instruction, foreign-born teachers, and education abroad trips all could help develop mobility capital in their students. Through the developing this mobility capital in their students, secondary schools would be able to prepare their students to navigating their time in a U.S. college or university. While a secondary school with an international focus can help students do well at a U.S. institution of higher education, students need to have a requisite base knowledge to benefit from such instruction (e.g., competency in English to be able to understand instruction in English). Secondary schools looking to prepare their students to study abroad by utilizing an international curriculum should tailor their approach to the skills and abilities of the students they enroll rather than adhere to one single approach to an international curriculum.

International student offices at U.S. institutions of higher education

Results from this study can also inform how international student offices can improve the programs and services they provided to international students coming to U.S. colleges and

universities. In working to support this student population, international student offices ought to work with international students' entire support networks, instead of only looking toward a network of contacts at their own institution. This is particularly true for international students who come from higher socioeconomic statuses who are most likely to have a global support network at their disposal. The role that family, either back home or in the U.S., plays in supporting international students makes it an area worth tapping into to support international students. International educators can support their students through helping to educate faculty and staff on how this network can help international students both academically and socially so that they can access this network when possible.

International student offices further could provide messaging directly to international students' family members to help them understand the U.S. higher education system as well as to connect them to campus resources that are designed to facilitate family support of their students (e.g., parent and family offices). International students in this study were able to gain emotional support from family members; however, family members living abroad were not always knowledgeable on the forms of support at U.S. colleges and universities that could further help their children. This was true for both participants coming from higher socioeconomic statuses as well as participants from middleclass families. Providing parents of international students with a better understanding of the programs and services available to students will help these parents be better resources for their children who are already looking to them for support.

Further, messaging to new and current international students about the formal student groups (e.g., nationality-based student groups with official recognition by their college or university) and informal student groups (e.g., WeChat or Facebook groups) will help to connect international students to valuable resources that exist on their campus. International student

offices can further create programming with these formal and informal groups to coordinate their efforts in supporting international students both academically and socially. International student offices could further benefit from utilizing the informal on-campus networks that international students likely are relying on. While many international students may organize or coordinate with formal international student groups to create programs for their students or to disseminate pertinent information to them, there is a need to engage with informal student groups in a similar way. Coordinating with these informal groups would help international student offices to get important information (e.g., changes to visa regulations, information on mandatory events, or programs geared toward international students) in a timely manner to international students via a medium they are already using. The ability for international student offices to coordinate with formal and informal international student groups will be dependent on the number of international students enrolled at an institution of higher education. UCLA is a very large university with a sizeable number of students from both China and India, which results in nationality-specific student groups existing on its campus. Higher education institutions with fewer international students or who do not have a large number of international students originating from a specific country may not have international student groups with which they can coordinate.

This study further points to the need for international student offices to take into account the mobility capital that many international students might potentially bring with them to the U.S. and to create programming that builds off of this unique form of capital they possess. While international students still have areas where they need support, a solely deficit view of these students' ability to succeed in the U.S. is not warranted. Many international students arrive with a wealth of prior experiences living or travelling abroad, attending internationally focused high

schools, participating in education abroad trips throughout grade school, and having had exposure to a wide range of cultures. All of these experiences help prepare students to adjust to navigating life in the U.S. The education abroad experiences and internationally focused high schools that many international students have attended have further familiarized them with the U.S. education system and made them more comfortable interacting with faculty and teaching assistants, thus reducing the need for U.S. institutions of higher education to educate international students on Western academic norms. In addition to programming that schools use to fill in the skill or knowledge gaps of some international students, they should additionally work to create programming and services that help international students recognize the skills that they already have and how to use their background experiences to help them navigate their time earning their degree. This is particularly true at globally elite universities that are most able to recruit and enroll international students from higher socioeconomic status groups whose families' connections and financial means enable these students to accumulate mobility capital. Programming should still exist for international students who do not come from higher socioeconomic statuses to fill any knowledge or skill gaps that they have due to not having the opportunity to develop mobility capital.

Finally, international student offices can better serve their students through acknowledging that some international students may opt out of befriending U.S. students who lack a cross-cultural disposition. International students who have had a wealth of international and cross-cultural experiences growing up may form an identity that is sandwiched between multiple cultures, and thus be drawn to similar minded students. For these students, not interacting with U.S. students may not be seen as a problem, but instead be an intentional choice. Because of this, international student offices should not use frequency of interaction between

international students and U.S. students as a primary measure to assess the successfulness of their programs. Instead, they ought to gauge the success of their programs based on their ability to help international students make the types of connections with students, whether from the U.S. or elsewhere, with whom they are likely to want to associate. Finally, international student offices can examine ways in which they can reach out to U.S. students who want to broaden their global mindset and provide them with opportunities to achieve this goal that does not solely rely on international students having to educate U.S. students.

Career centers and alumni relations

Findings from this study further have implications for career centers and alumni relations offices at U.S. institutions of higher education. International students in this study remained closely connected to their family and networks outside of the U.S. This was true for international students from both upper and lower socioeconomic statuses. The global networks of these students are largely untapped by schools when it comes to development work or when helping all students find internships or post-graduation employment. Career centers should seek to incorporate international students and international student groups into their programs and outreach efforts. This will benefit both U.S. and international students at these institutions through helping to connect students to a group of contacts throughout the world when looking for employment. For example, Chinese participants in this study held employment recruitment events where they invited employers from China. Career centers coordinating with international student groups can incorporate these types of international job fairs into their regular programming to expand their network of employers seeking to hire both international and U.S. students.

Similarly, incorporating international students with a strong global network into alumni relations offices will increase the potential donor pool by including individuals and groups beyond the borders of the U.S. International students and their families, particularly those from higher socioeconomic statuses, possess a valuable network beyond that which can be found within the borders of the U.S. from which institutions of higher education in the U.S. can elicit development funds.

Future Research

Further research is needed to understand how various forms of capital and transnational social fields aid international students at U.S. colleges and universities to fill gaps in this study as well as to build upon its findings. This study was primarily concerned with international students from India and China who overwhelmingly came from higher socioeconomic groups. Additional research is needed that focuses on international students from other nations, particularly those from other countries in Asia, from other countries outside of Asia, and from smaller countries that send fewer students to study in the U.S. Similarly, further research is needed that incorporates international students from lower socioeconomic groups to help fill gaps in this study. Investigating whether or not international students with different backgrounds are able to draw upon the same types of networks or forms of mobility capital would help to expand our understanding of the needs of these students and how they can be successful academically or socially while earning a bachelor's degree in the U.S. Additionally, this study was conducted only at UCLA, a large globally elite research intensive university in a major metropolitan area, potentially making its findings not generalizable to all other types of institutions in different regions. Consequently, further research is needed to study the experience of international

students at other types of postsecondary education institutions to see if the types of networks that international students are able to utilize differ at these institutions.

This study further utilized purely qualitative methods, further limiting the ability of its results to be generalized to international students at other institutions. Additional research is needed that incorporates elements of this study into quantitative methods. Existing quantitative studies of international students overwhelmingly use pre-existing survey instruments that were designed with U.S. students in mind (e.g., they do not acknowledge the role that support from outside the U.S. can play in aiding a student to succeed while studying in the U.S.). Additional quantitative research is needed that includes in their models the transnational networks of international students as well as their unique background experiences (e.g., attending international high schools, living throughout the world, etc.) to better understand how these elements alter the international student experience at U.S. colleges and universities.

This study, in part, found that the prior experiences that international students had shaped how they viewed themselves and the types of communities that they wished to engage with during their time in the U.S. However, this study did not examine how international students' experiences studying in the U.S. further altered their identity. Additional research is needed regarding whether or not the experience of studying in the U.S. further alters how these students view themselves and their relation to the U.S. and their country of citizenship. Similarly, how transnational social networks enable international students in the U.S. to remain connected to the culture of their sending country would help to further our understanding of how international students are able to benefit from their networks while in the U.S.

Finally, further research is needed on how time studying in the U.S. confers upon international students' additional mobility capital and whether or not international students are

able to utilize this capital in their post-graduation endeavors. Studying in the U.S. provides students, regardless of their background and prior experiences, exposure to living in a foreign country. How this helps to further develop the mobility capital of international students and whether or not they are able to utilize this mobility capital in their lives post-graduation would provide further understanding of the international student experience.

Conclusion

Through interviewing international students from India and China at the end of their undergraduate studies at UCLA, a more developed view of the international student experience has been established. This study sought to understand how international students attending U.S. colleges and universities are able to utilize various capitals and networks to be successful academically and socially. This study serves as a model for how international students can be conceptualized as not arriving to their campus with an overwhelming number of weaknesses that U.S. institutions of higher education need to rectify in order for international students to be able to do well while earning a bachelor's degree. While a segment of the international student population may continue to have struggles with English language abilities, an understanding of academic norms, or be reticent to interact with faculty and staff, it is erroneous to believe this is true of all international students. Many international students, with the support of their families, have taken efforts to develop aspects of mobility capital within themselves prior to even applying to a college or university in the U.S. These efforts to develop mobility capital range from education trips abroad, attending internationally focused postsecondary institutions, and even enrolling in summer courses at U.S. colleges and universities. Even students who do not purposefully seek to develop mobility capital to aid them in their studies often inadvertently developed such capital though having lived and travelled abroad or grown up in global cities that

contain a variety of cultures and perspectives. All of these experiences can result in international students arriving to postsecondary education institutions in the U.S. with a wealth of knowledge and skills needed to be successful academically and socially, rather than arriving with various deficiencies that need to be rectified.

Prior cross-cultural or global experiences can further alter the types of individuals and groups that international students look to for support. These prior experiences interacting with a variety of cultures develops within international students a perspective that is sandwiched between multiple cultures. This perspective can result in international students gravitating toward other students and groups who share a more multicultural or global perspective which can cause international students to forgo relationships with some U.S. students they deem to be closed-minded. Because of this, it is important that international student social success not be reduced to whether or not they interact with U.S. students. Instead social success needs to be reconceptualized as international students engaging with students who hold a more cross-cultural worldview or are open to such a perspective.

This study further provides a guide for how educators and future researchers can understand the support networks that contribute to international students doing well both academically and socially. International students are able to rely on a transnational social field that spans international borders and is activated before international students even apply to a postsecondary education institution in the U.S. Family members outside of the U.S., family and friends from back home living in the U.S., and a network of international students on their campus all provide international students with support and guidance during their studies. These forms of support come from not only beyond the confines of their campus but also from

throughout the world, thus highlighting the dynamic network that is available to aid international students throughout their time in the U.S.

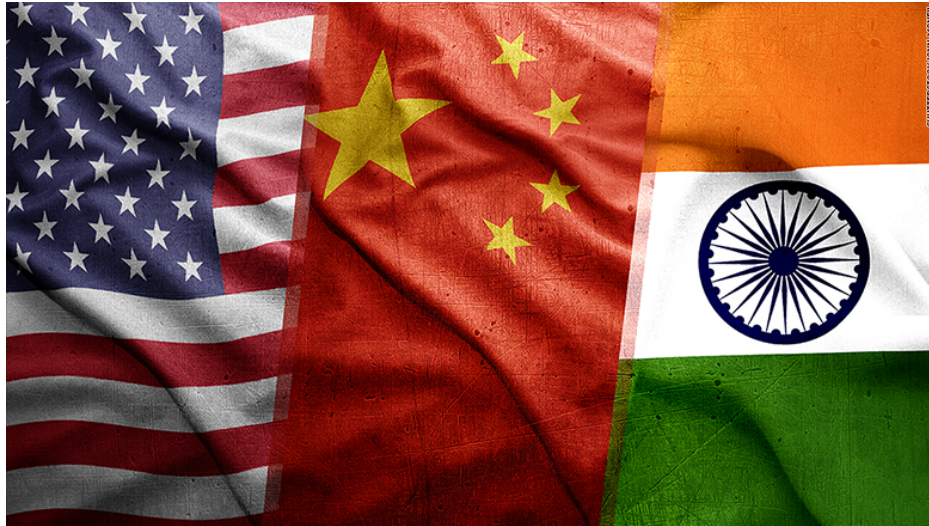
Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Pseudonym	Country of Citizenship	Gender	Degree Level	Source(s) of Funding Other Than Parrent's Savings
An	China	Female	Junior	-
Chen	China	Male	Senior	-
Feng	China	Female	Junior	-
Jing	China	Female	Senior	-
Jing	China	Female	Senior	-
Li	China	Female	Senior	-
Nian	China	Female	Junior	Scholarship from UCLA
Wenling	China	Female	Junior	Extended family savings; Part-time work salary
Ying	China	Female	Junior	-
Yu	China	Female	Senior	-
Zhi	China	Female	Senior	-
Aadya	India	Female	Junior	-
Ananya	India	Female	Junior	-
Arjun	India	Male	Junior	Loans
Diya	India	Female	Junior	Loans
Ishan	India	Male	Junior	-
Kiara	India	Female	Junior	-
Prisha	India	Female	Junior	-
Saanvi	India	Female	Junior	-
Hui	Macau/China	Female	Senior	Scholarship from high school
Akshay	Netherlands/India	Male	Junior	-

Appendix A

Recruitment Flier



Are you an UCLA undergraduate international student from China or India in either junior or senior standing?

Have you received advice from family or friends when UCLA Faculty or Staff were not able to help you?

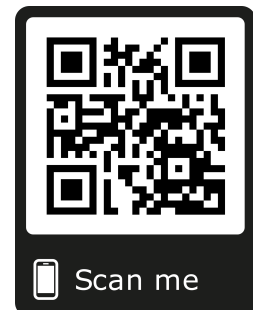
Do you feel your experiences before coming to UCLA uniquely prepared you for life in the U.S.?

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Benjamin Logan, from the University California Los Angeles, as part of his dissertation study to understand how international students in the United States utilize their past experiences and social networks to achieve their education and career goals.

Participation is completely voluntary. You must be an UCLA undergraduate student from either China or India who is currently in junior or senior status. Participants will be asked to complete a 60-90 minute in-person interview and will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card as a consideration for their time.

Individuals interested in participating in this study can complete the following screening survey: bit.ly/uclaintl or scan the QR code to the right.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Benjamin Logan at blogan@ucla.edu.



Appendix B

Recruitment Email

Subject: Seeking Chinese and Indian International Student Participants

Are you an UCLA undergraduate international student from China or India in either junior or senior standing?

Have you received advice from family or friends when UCLA Faculty or Staff were not able to help you?

Do you feel your experiences before coming to UCLA uniquely prepared you for life in the U.S.?

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Benjamin Logan, from the University California Los Angeles as part of his dissertation study to understand how international students in the United States utilize forms of social capital and migrant networks to navigate the U.S. higher education system to achieve their educational and career goals.

Participation is completely voluntary. You must be an UCLA undergraduate student from either China or India who is currently in junior or senior status. Participants will be asked to complete a 60-90 minute in-person interview and will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card as a consideration for their time.

Individuals interested in participating in this study can complete the following screening survey: **bit.ly/uclaintl**.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Benjamin Logan at blogan@ucla.edu .

Appendix C

Screening Survey

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how international students in the United States utilize forms of social or cultural capital and migrant networks to navigate their U.S. higher education system to achieve their educational and career goals.

Name

Email

What is your country of citizenship (e.g., Chinese, Indian, English, Singaporean, etc.):

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary, please describe

What do you consider to be your ethnicity (e.g., Han, Zhuang, Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, etc.)

What is the highest education level of your mother?

- Did not graduate from High School
- Graduated High school
- Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.S., etc.)
- Master's degree (e.g., M.A., M.B.A., etc.)
- Doctorate degree (e.g., Ph.D., M.D., J.D., etc.)

How are you paying for your education? (check all that apply)

- Parents' savings
- Extended family savings (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.)
- Scholarship from country of citizenship
- Scholarship from UCLA
- Loans
- Other, please describe

Appendix D:

Informed Consent

University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Beyond Acculturation: Toward a Non-Deficit View of International Students Culture and Support Networks

Principal Investigator: Benjamin Logan; Faculty Advisor: Dr. Robert Rhoads, from the Education Department at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) are conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an undergraduate student at UCLA who is a citizen of either China or India. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how international students in the United States utilize forms of social or cultural capital and migrant networks to navigate the U.S. higher education system to achieve their educational and career goals.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

If you agree to participate, you will first be asked to complete a brief screening survey used to ensure all participants meet the eligibility requirements to participate in this study (i.e., are current UCLA undergraduate students in their senior year who are citizens of India or China). This screening survey will additionally ask basic biographical questions (e.g., gender, mother's education level, etc.) to help further narrow down participants to those who have a variety of backgrounds.

If you agree to participate you will be asked to complete an interview (in person, via telephone, or via internet). The interview is anticipated to last no more than an hour and a half and will be audio-taped with your permission. The interview will be conducted at a time and place convenient to you.

Interview questions being asked will be open ended focusing on questions that fall into the following groups:

- Background and family history (e.g., Tell me a little about the community you grew up in? What languages do you speak? Before coming to UCLA, did you have any family or friends living (or who have lived) in California or the U.S.?)
- Current experiences navigating life at UCLA (e.g., Where or to who did you look for help if UCLA faculty or staff have been unable to assist you? Can you share an experience at UCLA that resulted in you struggling academically? Who or what helped you to overcome this issue?)
- Reflection on your experiences and what they have meant to you (e.g., How do you view yourself and your experiences in the United States compared to individuals who have chosen to permanently move to the U.S.? Do you feel your long-term career plans alter the way you interact with the existing international community in Los Angeles or the U.S.?)

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation will take a total of 60-90 minutes.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

The results of the research may help U.S. colleges and universities to better understand how they can build upon the backgrounds and networks of international students to better create support programs and institutional policies that aid international students in achieving their academic and career goals.

Will I be paid for participating?

Participants will be given a \$10 Amazon gift card as a thank you for their time. Participants will be given this gift card before the start of their in-person interview.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Confidentiality will be maintained by means of pseudonyms being attached to all data or information you provide.

Hand written notes and audio tapes will be transcribed on and stored in the researcher's password protected laptop; hard copies of the written materials will be kept in a locked drawer at primary investigator's office on the UCLA campus.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no identifiable information will be used.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

- **The research team:**

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

Benjamin Logan – blogan@saonet.ucla.edu or Faculty Advisor: Robert Rhoads – rrhoads@gseis.ucla.edu.

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

- *You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Contact Number

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix E:

Interview Protocol

Part I: Focused Life History – Placing international student’s experience in context of family and personal background

1. Tell me a little about the community you grew up in?
2. Where does your extended family live? Have they always lived in the same place?
3. What kind of middle school/high school did you attend growing up?
4. What international (or cross-cultural) experiences have you had in the past?
 - a. E.g., study abroad, family vacations, are a child of immigrant parents, your family moved from a rural to an urban part of your country, etc.
5. What was your first experience interacting with a culture that was different from your own?
 - a. Outside of your own country?
 - b. Within your own country?
6. What languages do you speak?
 - a. For how long have you spoken these languages?
 - b. Why did you learn these languages?
7. What was your motivation for choosing to study at UCLA?
8. Before coming to UCLA, did you have any family or friends living (or who have lived) in California or the U.S.?
9. What are your current goals after you graduate? (e.g., work in the U.S., go to graduate school, return home to work, etc.)

Part II: Details of Life Experience – Capitals and Networks that support undergraduate international students

10. Have you kept in contact with friends back home?
 - a. Do you have friends from back home who are also in the U.S.?
11. How has it been making friends in the U.S.?
 - a. Has your race/ethnicity affected who you have become friends with?
12. What student groups have you been involved in?
 - a. (Insert questions about specific groups I have identified and done document analysis of)
 - b. How have these groups helped you succeed either socially or academically?
13. Who do you hang out with outside of the UCLA community (i.e., non-UCLA students)?
 - a. How did you meet these people?
 - b. Has your race/ethnicity affected who you look to connect with?
14. Can you share an experience at UCLA that resulted in you struggling academically? (e.g., language ability, culture shock, academic norms, visa issues, lack of support from faculty/staff)
 - a. Who or what helped you to overcome this issue?
 - b. Were your previous international or cross-cultural experiences able to help you overcome these struggles? How about your network of friends or family?
15. Can you share an experience at UCLA that resulted in you struggling socially? (e.g., making friends, feeling comfortable in a foreign country, feeling like you belong, etc.)
 - a. Who or what helped you overcome this issue?

- b. Were your previous international or cross-cultural experiences able to help you overcome these struggles? How about your network of friends or family?
16. Where or to who did you look for help if UCLA faculty or staff have been unable to assist you?

Part III: Reflections on Meaning

17. How do you view yourself and your experiences in the United States compared to individuals who have chosen to permanently move to the U.S.?
18. Do you view yourself as a migrant? Why or why not?
- a. Do you believe the way you view yourself alters the type of support that is available to you as an international student?
19. Do you feel your long-term career plans alter the way you interact with the existing international community in Los Angeles or the U.S.?
20. Rank in order of most to least important, the forms of support that you have relied on as an international student? [If they struggle, provide the following list,
- a. Family and friends back home?
 - b. Family or friends in the U.S.
 - c. The migrant community in the United States?
 - d. International students at other schools?
 - e. Your government?
 - f. International office
 - g. Faculty members
 - h. Other international students at UCLA (from your same country, of the same ethnicity, etc.)
 - i. Staff members
 - j. Student groups]
21. What advice would you give to someone in your same shoes given what you know now?

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