

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY IN
HIGHER EDUCATION: EXAMINING DECISION
MAKING FACTORS FOR INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS CHOOSING TO STUDY IN THE
REGIONAL UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF OKLAHOMA

By

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Great Is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father!
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Though changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Great Is Thy faithfulness,
Great Is Thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy Faithfulness, Lord unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Pardon for Sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Thomas Chisholm – 1925

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Abstract: Internationalism, globalization and student mobility are on the rise and the shores of the world are drawing closer in the realm of higher education. These changes are driven by technology, advancements in media formats and capabilities, and available opportunities for international student admissions into universities in the United States (Enders & Fulton, 2002; McLuhan, 2008; Teichler, 2009). This phenomenon is not unique to, or driven exclusively by, higher education; in fact, 21st century research is showing that international student mobility is accelerating due to significant growth in global trade and industry, increases in foreign-government-sponsored programs for educational purposes, international societal interconnectedness, declining national controls, and increased educational opportunities (Open Doors, 2014; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2012; World Education Services, 2013).

In light on these global developments and the resultant increase in international student mobility, it was discovered there was a lack of information regarding why international students choose to attend RUSO schools in the State of Oklahoma to assist recruiting and retention efforts. The purpose of this exploratory sequential mixed method study (N=6 qualitative, N=139 quantitative) was to examine and describe factors that contributed to a decision by international students who choose to study within the RUSO system in Oklahoma. This research purpose is relevant and timely, in that recruitment and retention are key factors for administrators and faculty working to build these programs within the RUSO system.

Keywords: decision-making factors, international student mobility, influencers, push/pull factors, migration, international student migration

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Internationalism, globalization and student mobility are on the rise and the shores of the world are drawing closer in the realm of higher education. These changes are driven by technology, advancements in media formats and capabilities, and available opportunities for international student admissions into universities in the United States (Enders & Fulton, 2002; McLuhan, 2008; Teichler, 2009). This phenomenon is not unique to, or driven exclusively by, higher education; in fact, 21st century research is showing that international student mobility is accelerating due to significant growth in global trade and industry, increases in foreign-government-sponsored programs for educational purposes, international societal interconnectedness, declining national controls, and increased educational opportunities (Open Doors, 2014; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2012; World Education Services, 2013).

In light on these global developments and the resultant increase in international student mobility, it is not surprising that a line of research has developed around increasing internationalism in American higher education.

The aforementioned research has shown that enrollment of English Second Language (ESL) students and international students in general have increased in U.S. universities in recent years. Over the past three years, reports from an organization funded by a grant from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, known as Open Doors, suggested substantial growth in 2013, 2014, and 2015 (Open Doors, 2013, 2014, 2015). In 2013, they reported that 819,644 international students were enrolled in accredited U.S. higher education institutions. The number increased by 66,408 to 886,052 in 2014 and increased even more in 2015 to 974,926, reaching almost 1 million international students studying in the United States. Since 2009 for the past six academic years the Open Doors reports have shown a favorable increase each year in international students enrolled throughout institutions in the United States. According to the 2014 report, the United States still remains the destination of choice for higher education among college students today.

In another line of research related to student mobility, social scientists have questioned the concept of students' decision-making factors in choosing to stay or depart regarding the field of higher education (HE). For example, Italian-born social scientist Gambetta (1987) investigated:

... to what extent can educational behavior be represented as a product of intentional choice or, conversely, to what extent is it the result of processes which, in one way or another, minimize the scope for socially meaningful choice at an individual level (Gambetta, 1987, p. 7)

In related research, other social scientists (c.f., Hemsley-Brown, 2001; Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 1996; Roberts, 1984; Ryrie, 1981) have researched students' decision-

making styles and have delved into dynamics such as push-pull factors; institutional, economic, and cultural constraints; as well as personality and matters of subjective judgment.

Investigation of both growth in international participation in American higher education and students' decision-making in choosing education options have been productive. However, research has not yet fully examined the intersection or nexus of these two concepts. This study is situated at this intersection.

Therefore, it was the aim of this study to conduct inductive and deductive research to identify decision-making variables that are present prior to international students choosing to come to the U.S. for their higher education. This effort may bolster recruitment efforts and ultimately create a larger international presence on campuses for global development in higher education in Oklahoma.

Researcher's Perspective

The incentive for this study was grounded in current events arising within the institution in which the researcher is employed. In 2013, the researcher worked as an intern for the Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and gained keen insight to the specific numbers of international students who were coming to study in the United States, as well as, where they were coming from. However, while working for ECA the focus of *why* they were choosing to study in the United States was not a primary topic of discussion.

The researcher now works within an institution in the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) and has direct involvement with the international community on campus. In 2006, she began her higher education career as an instructor and it was there that she realized the impact of international students on a classroom setting. Later in her career, in

2013, she accepted an administrative position allowing her to work directly with the international community and develop academic programming and courses to enable their success as college students in the United States. In her role as the Director of the university's Language and Cultural Center she managed the English Second Language (ESL) program, which included academic coordination, as well as, recruitment and retention efforts of international students. Also a Designated School Official, the researcher worked directly with the admission process for new F-1 international students. This process included preparation of Form I-20s, the official document needed for international students to gain admission to a university in the U.S. According to the United States Department of State and Immigration Customs Enforcement Agency, international students visiting the U.S. on F-visas are given access to enter the country to attend a four year university, high school, private elementary, seminary or conservatory. The researcher continues to sit on several committees as she continues her dissertation research, including the Intercultural Dialogue Committee that fosters communication across the three campuses and between respective colleges and university groups.

Working in the international environment on the campus of the researcher's university has allowed her the opportunity to view data regarding current and future enrollment among the international community and to observe trends and issues that arise regarding recruitment and retention. Recently, in an effort to bolster recruitment and graduation rates among international students and increase retention and matriculation rates among students transferring from the ESL program to degree-seeking programs, the researcher and her colleagues began to question the impetus and rationales for the international students to come and study at their institution in Oklahoma. This inquiry was

the motivation for this study and subsequently, this study focuses specifically to those schools within the RUSO system in Oklahoma.

As she began a literature search related to increasing international student presence in U.S. universities, the researcher observed, in concurrence with Cubino, Sanchez and Subino (2006), that despite the growing number of international students coming to the United States, little research has been conducted into *reasons why* these students decide to study at these universities in specific regions of the United States. In particular, little or no formal research has been conducted into why these students are choosing the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) schools. It was also discovered through previous document analysis by the researcher of RUSO school websites and through personal conversations with administrators and faculty on each campus that the presence of English Second Language departments are not prevalent or are newly implemented in some of the RUSO institutions.

These findings further supported the need for a formal study of the reasons given by international students for their choices to study at RUSO schools within the state. It also reinforced her belief that addressing this issue would give her institution insight into strengthening efforts to enhance recruitment and retention among the international community and provide awareness to other RUSO schools to augment their recruitment efforts as well. Without this information, it will be difficult to build relationships in the proper arenas and focus recruiting efforts on the factors that most likely push and pull international students to make their decision to study in regional universities in Oklahoma.

Statement of the Problem

The problem for this study was a lack of information regarding why international students choose to attend RUSO schools in the State of Oklahoma to assist recruiting and

retention efforts. Without the proposed research and resultant knowledge of why international students make their education choices, it is impossible to maximize opportunities for RUSO schools to recruit for their ESL and International Programs. By addressing this issue and gaining this understanding, the state's RUSO schools will be able to gain the greatest benefits and return on investment from their recruitment efforts and can assist their international students in maximizing their educational experience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe factors that contributed to a decision by international students who choose to study within the RUSO system in Oklahoma. This research purpose is relevant and timely, in that recruitment and retention are key factors for administrators and faculty working to build these programs within the RUSO system.

Overview of the Study

To accomplish the research's purpose, the researcher needed a two-phase design that would allow initial small-scale inductive exploration of issues about which little was known, followed by extension to a larger-scale data gathering based on deductive analysis. To meet this design need, the researcher chose an *exploratory sequential mixed-methods* research design. To situate the chosen design in the purpose of the study, this section briefly defines and explains this type of design and gives specific details regarding how and why this research model is appropriate for the purpose of the study and explains the techniques that were used to integrate qualitative and quantitative data into this study.

This study addressed the decision-making factors of international students who chose to study within RUSO. The goals of the exploratory sequential design of the study were to

first qualitatively explore with a small sample of international students and then to determine if the qualitative findings would generalize to a larger sample of the population. Therefore, the first phase of the study was a qualitative exploration of education choices by a small group of international students who chose to study and complete their degree at a regional university in Oklahoma. In this phase, semi-structured interviews were used to collect field-notes and compile full transcripts of the qualitative information given by the students studying at the regional universities. From this initial exploration, the qualitative findings were used, along with data from the existing literature, to develop quantitative measures that were then administered to a larger sample in phase two of the study. In this second quantitative phase, Likert-type scales derived from qualitative findings and demographic surveys were collected from international students at the RUSO institutions. The participating institutions involved were: Northeastern State University, University of Central Oklahoma, East Central University, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, and Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

The ultimate purpose of this study was to identify and describe decision-making variables that are present prior to international students choosing to come to the U.S. to pursue higher education. It was hoped this information will provide information to key administrators in an effort to bolster recruitment efforts and ultimately create a larger international presence on RUSO campuses for global development in higher education in Oklahoma.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of international students currently studying or who have studied in RUSO schools in the past 24 months?
2. How were the students informed about study abroad opportunities in the U.S. and Oklahoma?
3. What factors influenced the international students' decision to attend a RUSO school?
4. Are the decision-making factors identified in a small number of qualitative interviews of international students generalizable to a larger sample of the population of RUSO international students and do common patterns and influences emerge?

Table 1

Data Sources and Analyses for the Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Sources	Planned Data Analysis
1. What is the demographic profile of international students currently studying or who have studied in RUSO schools in the past 24 months?	Demographic Questionnaire Qual / Quan	Descriptive Statistics
2. How were the students informed about study abroad opportunities in the U.S. and Oklahoma?	Personal Interview / Likert-Type Qualtrics Survey Qual / Quan	Constant Comparison Rating and Ranking
3. What factors influenced the international students' decision to attend a RUSO school?	Likert-Type Survey Quan	Rating and Ranking
4. Are the decision-making factors identified in a small number of qualitative interviews of international students generalizable to a larger sample of the population of RUSO international students and do common patterns and influences emerge?	Likert-Type Survey Qual / Quan	Rating and Ranking

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations of the Study

Assumptions

As for all research based on self-reported data, three assumptions were accepted for this study. It was assumed that:

1. The participants understood the oral and written questions they were asked,
2. The participants knew the correct answers to the questions, and
3. The participants answered truthfully.

Several steps were taken to help mitigate these assumptions. First, participants were informed and assured that their anonymity and/or confidentiality on both the semi-structured interviews (phase one) and the written questionnaires (phase two) were protected and data was confidentially kept and preserved with the researcher. Second, to strengthen the validity, reliability, and workability of the instrument used in the quantitative survey phase of this study, the researcher formed a focus group of administrators, ESL instructors, international students and international educators to verify instrument clarity and answerability. A pilot study was performed by giving the survey in paper form to a small number ($N=5$) of international students prior to the final distribution to the sample. These students did not participate in the final distribution of the instrument for the quantitative phase of the study.

It was hoped that these steps helped support the veracity of the assumptions of the study. However, the researcher could not know for certain whether the assumptions were true, and the extent to which they may not have been true may have affected the results of the study in ways that could not be known.

Limitations

The major limitations of this study lay in the fact that the sampling was entirely volunteer. The voluntary sampling created three limitations:

1. The purposive choices of participants were constrained in the phase-one qualitative interviews. Only international students willing to participate could make input into this critical phase of the study. This limitation was addressed in the study by detailed descriptions of the participants.
2. The composition of the sample for the larger phase-two quantitative survey was constrained. No random selection of participants was possible, nor was careful purposive sampling. The volunteer sample actually received may have been biased in ways that could not be controlled. This limitation was addressed by detailed description of the obtained sample and notation of obvious biases.
3. The size of the phase-two sample may have been compromised, as voluntary participation may have limited the number of students willing to participate in and complete the online survey circulated to students. An inadequate sample size may have posed a problem in yielding sufficient data to complete the quantitative phase of this study. This limitation was addressed by sending out a large number of survey questionnaires to make it likely to obtain a proposed returned sample size of $N=100$.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study were defined by narrowing this study to international students studying in the Regional University System of Oklahoma within a two-year window. Therefore, the results of this study are generalizable only to international students who are currently studying in RUSO schools or have not exceed 24 months since graduation

from a RUSO school. Generalization beyond this specific population must be approached with caution.

Definitions of Key Terms

Conceptual Definitions

Choice Theory: Defined by Glasser (1998) as the proposition that the only person who can control one's behavior is oneself and that all behavior is chosen. The theory also proposes that human behavior is driven by five basic needs: survival, love and belonging, power, and freedom.

Migration: someone entering a country for 12 months or more (United Nations, 2016).

Voluntary Migration: migration of individuals who have left their homes of their own accord to pursue economic opportunities, for personal enrichment, or to be reunited with their families (Adamson, 2006; Haug 2008).

Forced migration: includes refugees and displaced persons (Adamson, 2006).

Involuntary migration: some examples our trafficking, ethnic cleansing and deportation (Adamson, 2006).

Networks: A group or system of interconnected people or things. A group of people who exchange information, contacts, and experiences for professional or social purposes (Haug, 2008).

Push Factors: Factors that cause a human being to leave his/her country of origin and migrate to another location usually internationally with the intention of finding higher education, job stability, or travel.

Pull Factors: Factors that come from the country of destination that entice an individual to travel, study or move there.

Rational Choice Theory: Refers to the relationship between social behavior and the rationale of measuring costs against benefits. Becker (2007) suggested it defines a consistent ranking of choice alternatives and is determined by a set of values and preference. The theory is commonly used in economics, but considered here as gain on investment of human capital.

Social Networking: A network of social interactions and personal relationships.

Social Theory of Networks and Migration: This theory defines the relationship between individuals and their counterparts in other regions of the world. It explains that benefits arise because of this relationship and the social capital that can be acquired through the use of these types of networks, such as quality education, higher wages, or foreign employment (Coleman, 1990); (Haug, 2008); (Boyd, 1989); and (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, Edward-Taylor, 1993).

Operational Definitions

Decision-Making: The thought process of making a choice between two or more available options.

Demographic Profile: In this study, a quantitative description of participants that includes the variables of: country of birth, country of citizenship, gender, university attending among RUSO schools, age category, requirement of English language training, living situation, and student status (ie. freshman sophomore, junior, senior)

Designated School Official (DSO): An individual who is nominated by the school's president to assist and oversee the enrollment of F, J and M international students as defined below.

The individual must be a U.S. citizen or a lawful permanent resident of the U.S.

English Second Language (ESL): Speakers whose first language (L1) is something other than English.

Factors influencing international students' decisions to attend a RUSO school: Reasons for such decisions as determined in this study by qualitative interview answers from international students; as well as, gained knowledge from the literature.

F-1: A term used by the U.S. Department of State that determines the status of an international student wanting to study as a full time student in either a university, college, high school, seminary, conservatory, or any other academic institution, including a language training program.

I-20: A term used by the U.S. Department of State, Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) and the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) that defines the form issued by an institution granting an international student acceptance to study within their university or school. This form provides information on students with an F, J or M status as defined below.

iELTS: International English Language Testing System. This is an exam used by universities to assess the English language skills of international students and grant them access to U.S. and English speaking universities.

ISM: International Student Migration or International Student Mobility. Both terms describe the action of a student to intentional move from the country of birth or citizenship to the destination of choice to study abroad.

L-1: The first or "native" language of an individual.

Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO): According to the RUSO website (2014) the Regional University System of Oklahoma is a nine-member system that includes six regional universities in Oklahoma including: East Central University, Northeastern State University, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Southeastern Oklahoma State

University, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, and University of Central Oklahoma. The System plans, makes policies, and evaluates progress and performance of these institutions. RUSO and the administrative office of the System monitor compliance through policies and procedures and implements and evaluate system-wide projects and initiatives.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA): Mastery of any language that an individual gains second to his/her first language.

SEVP: An acronym used by the U.S. Department of State that defines the Student and Exchange Visitor Program. This is the organization that oversees incoming international students to the United States.

SEVIS: An acronym used by the U.S. Department of State that defines the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. This system is used by universities, colleges, high schools, seminaries, conservatories, or any other academic institutions, including language-training programs to input real-time data concerning international students. These institutions are responsible for maintaining international student records throughout their stay in the United States.

Test of English Foreign Language (TOEFL): An exam given to individuals whose, first language (L1) is something other than English and who wish to attend a school or university in the United States or other English speaking country.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2011) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) reported that numerous successful models of mixed methods research have produced useful data for future development in the field of educational research; therefore, this union of theoretical models framed this study. The study combined three theoretical aspects:

1. A general philosophical underpinning,
2. A theoretical perspective that guided the inductive qualitative phase one of the study, and
3. A set of related theories that supported the deductive quantitative phase two of the study and the research questions and predictive working hypothesis.

Specifically, the study was grounded in the philosophy of Pragmatism. Aspects of Constructivism and Social Constructionism theoretical perspectives framed phase one, or the qualitative phase of this study. Theories used in phase two, the quantitative phase, of this study to develop a predictive working hypothesis included: Choice Theory (Glasser, 1998) and Rational Choice Theory (Coleman & Fararo, 1993; Goode, 1997; Scott, 2000). These theoretical aspects are discussed in this section.

Philosophical Underpinnings

The philosophy that guided this research study was *pragmatism/progressivism*. The study's purpose was to identify key decision-making factors of international students relating to why they chose the RUSO school system to study and complete their degree in Oklahoma. The type of mixed methods research used for this study began by qualitatively researching these factors with a small purposively sampled group in an inductive approach. Therefore the theoretical lenses of Constructivism and Social Constructionism were used to allow for themes and personal reflections to emerge from the data collected.

Elias and Merriam (2005) suggested that societies and cultures are evolving, that there is mass immigration into the United States, and that this phenomenon has been occurring for centuries. This theory of progressive education developed post-industrial-revolution as a response to individuals wanting to be liberated and enhance their gifts and

abilities to use in the growing societies that included vast amounts of immigrants. This philosophy led to a learner-centered approach to education in which individuals' particular needs were met. It was pragmatic in nature and yet progressive for the time, which is where the practical naming of the philosophy occurred: Pragmatism/Progressivism.

Theorists and philosophers such as Dewey, Rousseau, and Locke were key initiators in the evolution of teaching based on pragmatism/progressivism philosophy, and individuals such as Lindeman, James, and Pierce set forth the philosophy's objectives. The characteristics and goals of this philosophy relate to education for democracy, social reform, and the betterment of the human condition. The supposition that relates pragmatism/progressivism to this study was that international students wanting to study abroad are looking for a way to make their lives better through education and study abroad opportunities. This supposition affirmed the proposition that there is a relationship between education and society that can be experienced through a democratic education (Elias & Merriam, 2005). The supposition assumed students are looking for a way to enhance their marketability in today's society and studying in the U.S. is one way to accomplish this goal. Within the philosophy of pragmatism is the opportunity to view this research through the theoretical lenses of Constructivism and Social Constructionism. The following section addresses the components of each of these theoretical perspectives, which framed the study's inductive qualitative phase one.

Constructivism

Constructivism is one form of Interpretivism and holds the belief that the social world and the natural world are distinct areas of potential research and very different in regards to the way they should be studied. The constructivist lens is often used for qualitative work and

in mixed method studies (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). It often focuses on the experiences of individuals (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Constructivists such as Dewey, Montessori, and Kolb hold similar beliefs, and the viewpoint is supported by instructional theory and the constructivist epistemology that knowledge and truth are related and constructed in the mind of the individual. Dewey was involved in this type of theoretical evolution relative to the creation of active-intellectual learning environments between 1896 and 1904; Montessori valued experiential learning by encouraging a learning process that allowed each student to have a personal learning experience with a hands-on approach (Elias & Merriam, 2005). This constructivist theoretical lens was used in phase one of this study during the qualitative phase to facilitate a pragmatic ability to understand the reasoning behind the international students' higher educational choices. It looked to Russian psychologist Vygotsky's Social Development Theory as a starting point to understand how individuals are influenced in their social learning by individuals Vygotsky calls the More Knowledgeable Others (MKO), as well as, to formulate semi-structured interview questions for phase one of the study.

During phase one of this study, the qualitative phase, the researcher used the semi-structured interview questions and open dialogue from the international students to help guide the research process and allow themes and theories to emerge from the data. Findings from the qualitative data were then used to construct a quantitative instrument that allowed the researcher to access a larger sample and determine what ultimately influenced the students to make their RUSO education decision.

From review of the literature, there are constructs that were analyzed post data collection that helped build the quantitative instrument and allowed for validity measures to be in place prior to large-scale distribution to the sample of the target population. Theories

found in the literature by social scientists such as Gambetta (1996), Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006), Hodkinson, Sparkes, and Hodkinson (1996), Roberts (1984), and Ryrice (1981), suggested more structural models that will be examined later in the deductive rationalization of this research.

Social Constructionism

Social Constructionism is a theoretical orientation that underpins many new approaches to studying the social sciences that have emerged in North America and Europe over the last 30 years. These approaches are more radical and critical options of research that have ultimately derived from philosophical roots dating back hundreds of years. Burr (2003) stated that, "...our ways of seeing the world do not come from objective reality but from other people, both past and present" (p.7). She goes on to explain that, "social constructionism denies that our knowledge is a direct perception of reality. In fact it might be said that as a culture or society we construct our own versions of reality between us" (p. 6).

Through the lens of Social Constructionism similarities to Constructivism can be seen. The belief that the human and the natural world are different and should be studied accordingly are congruent and they are both utilized frequently in mixed methods research. However, in Social Constructionism the key is the focus on *group settings and cultures*. There is also a difference in theory development such as the determining factor that Papert and Harel (1991) pointed out in which they defined constructionism in terms of problem-based learning in the classroom environment where the learner is immersed in an activity that will be related to a larger task and foster support and encouragement for the learner.

Although Social Constructionism is heavily discussed in the realm of learning environments, it is also considered to be an approach to the social sciences that draws its

influences from philosophy, sociology, and linguistics with relevance on the *social aspect* of constructing realities within shared environments. Burr (2003) pointed out that social constructionism must include a “critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge” concerning the “accepted ways we understand the world of social processes and interactions in which people constantly engaged with each other” (p.5). It must also include the idea that “knowledge and social action go together” (p.5). Different constructions bring different kinds of action from various human beings. For instance, what is acceptable and normal social behavior in one country or culture may be entirely different in another; therefore, knowledge of a particular group of people is important before any social action can take place and any ground can be gained in recruitment efforts and understanding of decision making by internationals. The working hypothesis for this study was that the international students are influenced by social factors and family-related influences that relate to Social Constructionism in decision-making.

Another basis of consideration for Social Constructionism in this study was the fact that many of the countries from which international students come are based on collectivist cultures rather than individualistic cultures and are influenced strongly by family and relatives to make decisions that are best for the family unit (Carteret, 2011). Collectivist cultures, including many eastern countries, believe in a more unified approach to decision-making. Furthermore, Boyd (1989), Massey (1990), and Massey, Alarcon, Durand, and Gonzalez (1987) presented the idea that migration in terms of sociology was made on the basis of networks. Haug (2008, p. 588) supported this view and cited others who agreed: “Migration research has established that social networks are commonly an important determinant of migration plans and the choice of destination (Banerjee, 1983; Böcker, 1994;

Boyd, 1989; Bühner, 1997; Faist, 1997; Fawcett, 1989; Toney, 1978; Wilpert, 1992)”.

Therefore, the theoretical lens of Social Constructionism can underpin both phases of this research study to provide insight into how human beliefs can be influenced and constructed through their social surroundings.

Inductive Theoretical Frame

Qualitative research does not commonly identify a predictive or deductive theory to lead the inquiry; moreover, Merriam (2009) stated, “... a central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds.

Constructionism thus underlies...a basic qualitative study” (p. 22). Therefore, the first portion of the study began with qualitatively interviewing the pre-selected participants by conducting interviews that included semi-structured questions that allowed for open-ended conversations to emerge and allowed the students to openly describe their environment prior to their decision to move to Oklahoma and study in a RUSO school. Throughout the interview process the researcher continuously reviewed field notes and audio transcriptions to understand how these individuals made sense of their lives and experiences (Merriam, 2009) and how they ultimately made the decisions they did to study in Oklahoma.

After the initial qualitative interview phase, combining the theories of Vygotsky (1978, 1986, 2004), Burr (2003), Merriam (2009), and Lincoln and Guba (2013) allowed for the development of a relevant theory base to emerge that was then used within this study to build the theoretical framework to inform the planned quantitative deductive phase of this study.

After researching the literature, these theoretical lenses, Constructivism and Social Constructionism, emerged as the most relevant as an inductive theoretical foundation for this

study and provided insight into how similar past studies successfully utilized them to compile data to answer the research questions associate with student decision-making processes.

Quantitative Predictive Model

After review of the social science literature of decision-making in higher education (HE) the researcher identified several dominant theories. Theory of Migration, Choice Theory, Rational Choice Theory and Push-Pull factors appeared to be among the most frequently referenced in the literature; Behavioral Decision Theory was also frequently discussed in the literature but was not emphasized in this study. These, along with theories relating to collectivist and individualistic decision-making, were included and led the researcher to build the quantitative predictive model for this study.

Theory of Migration

Ernest George Ravenstein developed the original theory of migration in 1885. For his migration study he compared census data gathered between the years of 1871 and 1881 and sought to determine patterns of movement. Eventually he reviewed birthplace data and compared it with the current population of each country. By doing so he began to make inferences and get an overall representation of where people had migrated or stayed in relation to their birthplace. He divided his study participants into three categories (Ravenstein, 1885):

1. Native County element meaning they were born in the county in which they lived.
2. Border element meaning they were born in an adjoining county.
3. Foreign element meaning they were from outside the United Kingdom.

Ravenstein's Theory will be discussed at length in Chapter II of this study.

Choice Theory. Choice theory was developed by psychologist William Glasser (1998) and proposes that we are internally not externally motivated. He points out that there are essentially 5 basic needs in life:

- **Survival** (food clothing, shelter, breathing, personal safety and others)
- **Love** (belonging and connecting)
- **Power** (significance and competence)
- **Freedom** (autonomy)
- **Fun** (learning and enjoyment of life)

This model is analogous to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It suggests that humans are internally motivated to make their own decisions. There may be factors that push or pull individuals to make a decision, but ultimately the individual is the decision maker. Glasser suggested there is a Quality World that individuals alone can create through choice.

Rational Choice Theory. Haug (2008) described Rational Choice Theory as a leading approach in the field of migration sociology. *Migration* can refer to either a permanent move or a temporary move for educational purposes or workforce development (International Organization for Migration, 2014). Within this line of thought is the idea that there are two main perspectives in the decision-making process by the actor which are micro and macro levels of modeling. Haug explained that the individual's behavior could explain the migration process. Furthermore, Esser asserted (as cited in Haug, 2008) that rational choice is influenced by the economic approach and by behavioral decision theory in social psychology. Esser claims that, "... the core of rational choice theory is the subjective expected utility model" (as cited in Haug, 2008, p.586)

Haug (2008) claimed that in regard to migration as a logical action, the motivation is to maximize the person's net benefits. She claimed that human capital is highly regarded as a determining factor in decisions relating to migration whether temporary or permanent. Ultimately, she claimed "... migration takes place when a comparison of the outcomes of either staying at the place of origin or at the place of destination reveals the latter alternative to be more attractive" (p. 587).

Social Theory of Networks and Migration. Haug (2008), Boyd (1989), and Massey et al. (1987) also discussed social networks and migration theory. Boyd (1989) and Massey et al. (1987) articulated a theory that the sociology of migration is constructed on the basis of networks. This definition of social networks encompasses the social and familial infrastructure that an individual possess, not necessarily the current common terminology of social network such as Facebook, Twitter and others. However, the researcher hypothesized that this type of interaction would emerge in the qualitative findings to establish the importance of commercialized social networks as a means of enticing students to certain places of study via friends and relatives already studying at the institution. Haug (2008) pointed out several factors that contribute to the use of social networks such as funding for travel and travel documents, and border crossing, among other reasons. She referenced multiple citations of migration research that "... has established that social networks are commonly an important determinant of migration plans and the choice of destination such as: Banerjee (1983), Böcker (1994), Boyd (1989), Bühner (1997), Faist (1997), Fawcett (1989), Toney 1978) and Wilpert (1992)" (p. 588).

Deductive Framework Significance

By researching the above theories the researcher found that it was useful to incorporate them into the deductive framework for the second quantitative phase of the study. As the literature has shown, some of the leading decision-making theories helped to support the quantitative phase of this study. This deductive theory base provided the foundations for the framework that allowed the researcher to establish a working deductive hypothesis for this study.

Working Hypothesis. Through application of the deductive theory base discussed above, it was the researcher's working hypothesis that the decision-making factors of international students would rest on familial push factors and social pull factors to the institutions of higher education, informed through the collectivist theory that family has a high push factor on foreign students, yet the student has the ultimate say in the decision that is made and is influenced by social networking factors. The researcher felt that possible independent variables (IVs) in the working hypothesis could include, familial push factors such as prior knowledge of the parents regarding the location or connections through agents familiar with the institution, as well as, social networking factors, such as, friends or family members already studying at the institution. The dependent variable (DV) in the working hypothesis would be the ultimate decision made to study at the RUSO School.

Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Elements of the Study

The integration of qualitative inquiry and the use of quantitative hypothesis building and testing provided a formative framework to thoroughly investigate the question at hand as to why international students decided to study at RUSO institutions. Both elements were needed to completely study and research this topic.

Researchers in the field of education and the social sciences have utilized mixed methods to develop inductive and deductive theoretical frameworks in which they make use of existing theory to guide their investigations. However, it is important to understand that the qualitative phase of this study helped to explore and build theory that was used deductively in the quantitative phase. The use of existing theory was, however, utilized in the qualitative phase to help to prepare the semi-structured interview questions, but the researcher was careful not to compromise the inductive portion of the study by leading the participants with established theoretical concepts (Ali & Birley 1998).

As displayed below in Figure 1, the qualitative inductive initial phase of this study utilized constructivism and social constructionism emphasizing the theories of Dewey (1916, 2009), Elias and Merriam (2000), Vygotsky (1978), Burr (2003), and Haug (2008) to develop semi-structured interview questions to use during the qualitative interview process of participants. This initial phase was needed to help guide the researcher to develop a quantitative instrument that was disseminated to a larger sample of the population in order to test a deductive working hypothesis.

According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011), a mixed methods study can contribute greatly to the literature by including both qualitative and quantitative data. As seen in the second Quantitative Phase 2 of the diagram below, the researcher has included, as suggested by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011) a directional hypotheses, backed up by multiple theories, that suggests the international students' decision-making was guided by push pull factors and social networking.

Also shown in Figure 1 is the second quantitative, deductive phase of this study. This portion of the study was crucial in validating the results of the qualitative phase of the study

to elucidate whether the qualitative theory-building could be used for theory-testing with a larger sample of the population.

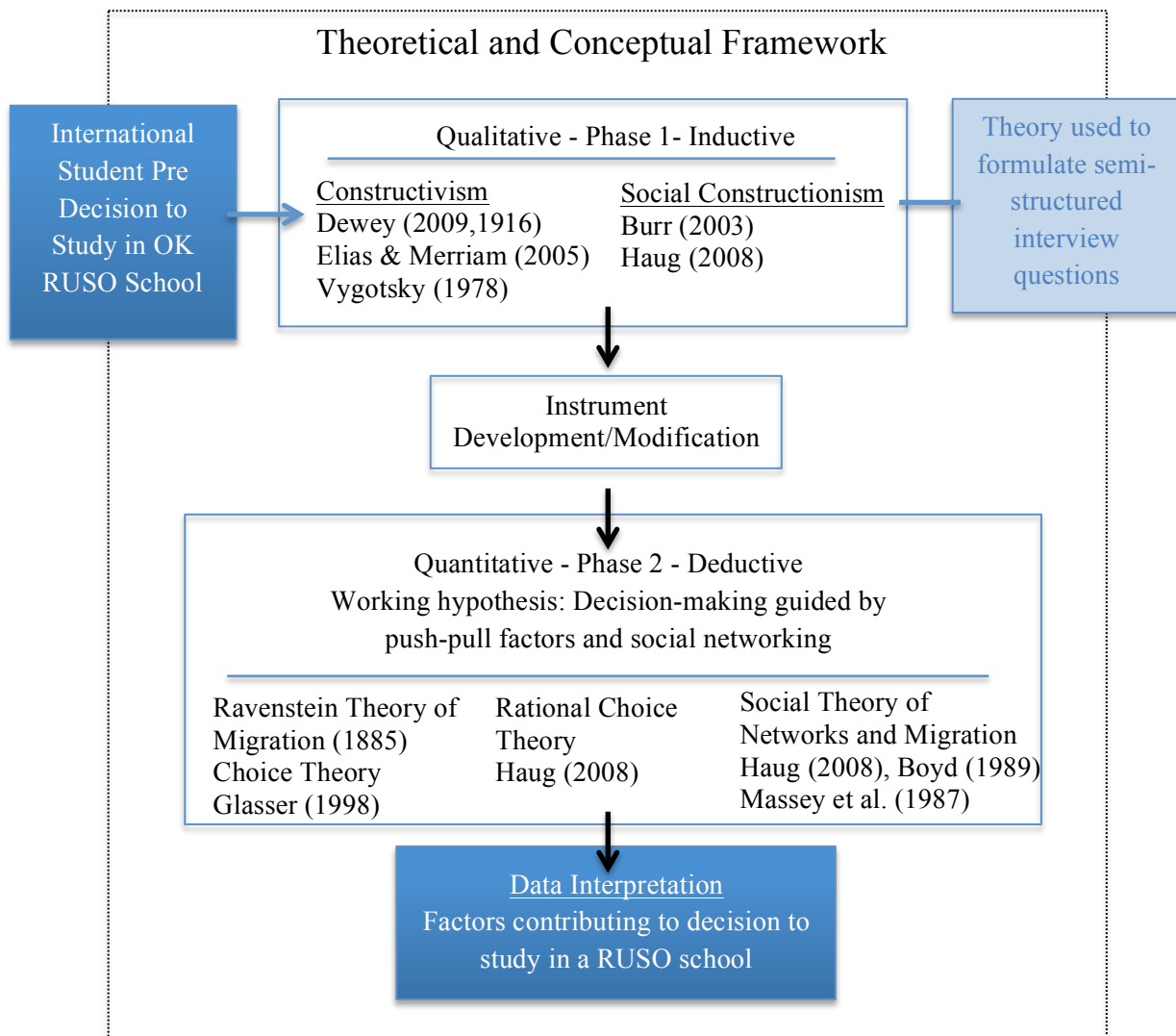


Figure 1. Theoretical and Conceptual framework for exploratory sequential mixed methods design.

The theories and established literature discussed here lead to a thorough and strong framework for this exploratory sequential mixed methods design. By utilizing the inductive approach of observation → pattern → tentative hypothesis → theory and then the deductive approach of theory → hypothesis → observation → confirmation (Trochim, 2006), the purpose

of this study was to identify decision-making variables that were present in international students prior to their choosing to come to the U.S.

Significance of the Study

Hopefully, success attainment of the purpose of this study will provide information to key administrators to bolster recruitment efforts, strengthen return on recruitment investment, and ultimately create a larger international presence on RUSO campuses for global development in higher education in Oklahoma.

Regional universities in Oklahoma are home to some of the brightest minds in the state full of passion and a bright outlook for tomorrow. These students possess many hard skills such as technical, scientific, and academic knowledge. They are eager to learn and make new friendships. This is a poignant time in their life to be exposed to the international community. As stated earlier in this introduction, internationalism, globalization and student mobility are on the rise and the shores of the world are drawing closer in the realm of higher education. It is at this time that our university students should embrace and interact with their international counterparts to prepare them for this new workplace society that they will soon be entering. In light of the recent budget cuts, as discussed by Altbach and De Wit (2014), fiscal cut backs have indeed caused international initiatives to suffer at both the state and campus levels. In turn, this means diminishing resources for universities; therefore, by bolstering the international population on RUSO campuses and in the state of Oklahoma we will bring an increase to the state's economy, awareness to global empathy, and possibly forge international alliances among the upcoming generation of graduating college students who will be our leaders of tomorrow.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The objective of this chapter is to summarize, synthesize, and interpret findings from selected published research and theoretical perspectives addressing the topic of international student migration (ISM), international student mobility (ISM), push-pull factors to study abroad and decision-making factors for international students who choose to study abroad. Much of the academic literature and scholarly writings discussed in this chapter regarding the topic of student-mobility and migration discuss both long-term or degree seeking students, as well as, short-term study abroad (Kehm, 2005; Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, de Wit & Vujić 2013; de Wit, Ferencz & Rumbley, 2013). Multiple studies have been conducted regarding student mobility in Europe and Australia (Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Maringe & Carter 2007; Pimpa, 2003; Van Mol & Timmerman 2014). The current literature also indicates who is coming to the United States (U.S.) to study, how many are coming and from what regions of the world they are traveling. The available research does not reveal more specifically *why* they are ultimately coming for extended periods of time to study within the Regional University System of Oklahoma, which was the focus of the present study. This chapter will also cover literature regarding the origins

of immigrant and student mobility and migration to the U.S. and provide in depth coverage from the literature regarding post 9/11 migration, current logistics of international student mobility (ISM), and finally theorists' explanations of The theory of Migration, Choice Theory, Rational Choice Theory, and push-pull factors with inference to their impact on ISM.

To begin examination of migration to what is now the U.S., one must turn back the clock to the 17th Century. The year was 1607 and it was the beginning of colonial immigration. The territory now known as the United States of America was beginning to see the first migration of English settlers to its land. It is likely that the first settlers at James River had little inkling, only dreams, of what would become of the land they inhabited and the massive numbers of people who would eventually come to this land to live, study and raise generations of families. America saw its share of hardships in the first years of immigration, but through many years of acts, resolutions and federal laws, this land is still sought after by individuals seeking higher education and migration from around the globe (Garis, 1927).

This country has been creating laws and acts regarding immigration and the treatment of foreign groups and individuals since the 1600s, and we can presently see current laws and trending conversation in our government regarding aliens and foreign nationals, both illegal and legal. Regardless of prevailing immigration regulation, the flow of new arrivals into the U.S. continues, and so the question remains: "What makes this country so desirable?" What makes men and women both old and young want to come to this country; more precisely for the purposes of the present study, what makes them want to come here and study at universities in the heartland of America? Perhaps

John F. Kennedy expressed it best when he recounted what Alexis de Tocqueville saw in America. He said:

...America was a society of immigrants, each of them had begun life anew, on an equal footing. This is the secret of America: a nation of people with the fresh memory of old traditions who dared to explore new frontiers, people eager to build lives for themselves in a spacious society that did not restrict their freedom of choice and action. (Kennedy, 1964, p. 2)

Some suggestions heard in the news and from internationals of today include freedom of religion, freedom of speech, the American dream, or to gain education to take back to their country. Wang (2013), when addressing opportunities to study in the U.S., suggested, “Studying abroad is not just a personal pursuit for a better education and life, but also a national project historically articulated within nationalism and against Western colonialism in Asia” (p. 6-7). Although Wang was specifically discussing Asian students in America, he suggests that for Chinese students to study in the United States places them in elite status among their peers and fellow classmates. Throughout this literature review there are multiple accounts of similar sentiments around the globe regarding studying in the United States; it was a theme observed frequently by this researcher while searching the literature. Against this backdrop of an international perception of the prestige of American higher education, this chapter presents a review of literature relating to U.S. immigration and study in the U.S.

A Brief History of United States Immigration and Migration Climate

In the seventeenth century, 1607 to be more precise, recorded United States history reports that English settlers began migrating to the James River area to form colonies along the East coast of the United States in areas such as Maryland, New England, and Virginia. Later in that century, in 1656, laws concerning the migration of

Quakers into certain territories began to evolve and with the transportation of slaves to the U.S. sentiments of segregation and prejudice began to escalate among local society. In the 1700s, these colonies began to implement laws that would be unfathomable today, such as the ruling on March 12, 1700, that stated Massachusetts would not allow lame, impotent or infirmed individuals to enter its territory. On September 17, 1717, Pennsylvanians decided to enact a law that required all German immigrants to take an Oath of Allegiance to King George and his successors. It was around this time that British Parliament drafted the Plantation Act that Lemay and Barken (1999) reported was a model for future U.S. Naturalization Acts. Granting permission for immigrants to enter and remain in the new colonies was apparently fostered by the realization of the ruling officials of the time that migration to these colonies could be beneficial to the population and growth of the settlements (Garis, 1927; Lemay and Barken, 1999).

It was during the 1700s that the new government of the United States drafted the first Naturalization Acts, and while over the next hundred years the new government would waiver over rules and stipulations regarding becoming naturalized citizens, this did not discourage the people from coming to America. They came in waves, numerous waves of immigrants washed onto America's shores over the next several centuries. It was seen as a land of hope and opportunity, a place to start new and plant roots. Figure 2 reports the immigration from 1820-2001.

It was around this same time that the new country saw what became known as its First Wave of immigrants. Some scholars, such as Foner (2000) suggest the first wave of immigrants in New York began to settle between the years of 1880-1929. This date is common among other literature as well. Foner states that "between 1880 and 1920, close

to a million and a half immigrants arrived and settled in the city [New York] – so that by 1910 fully 41% of all New Yorkers were foreign-born” (2000, p. 1). However, other scholars and reports such as *The Population Reference Bureau* in 2003 conveyed that the first wave to America began prior to 1820 before entries began to be recorded. This first group was made up of the English, who accounted for up 60% of population in the year 1790, Scots, Scots-Irish, Germans, and people from the Netherlands, France in Spain (Martin & Midgley, 2003).

Immigration to the United States, 1820 to 2001

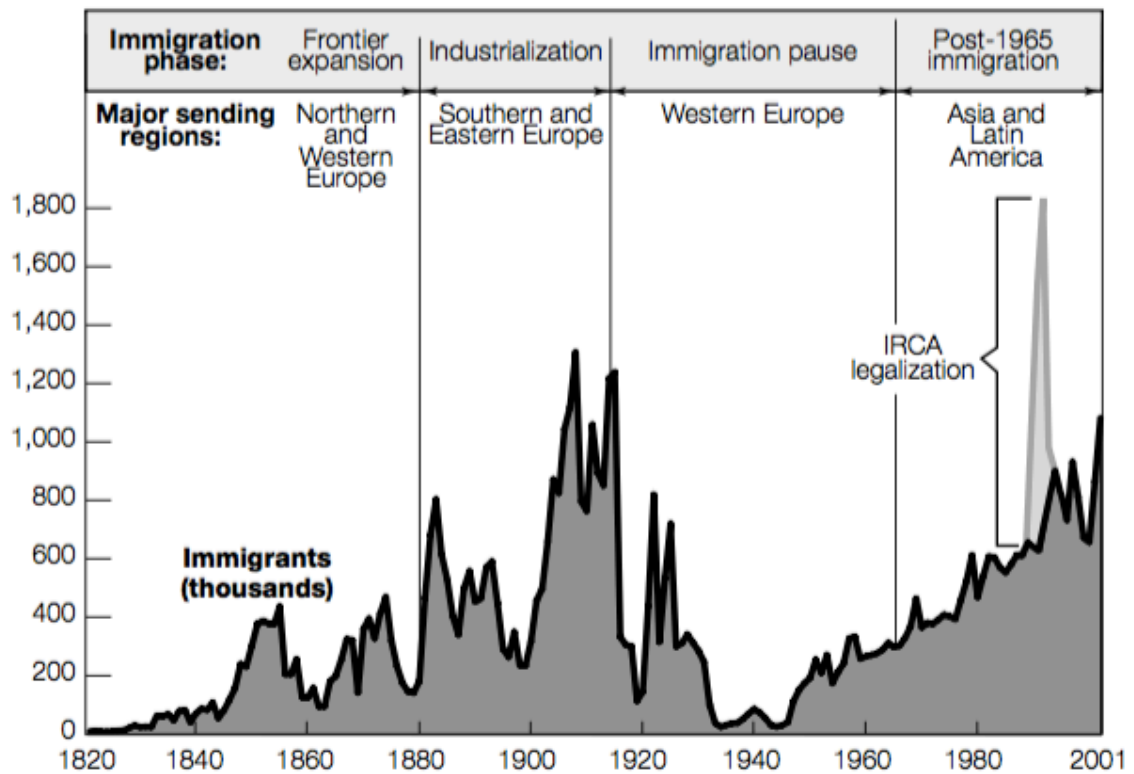


Figure 2. Waves of immigration that occurred in the U.S. from 1820 to 2001 (Population Reference Bureau in 2003).

During this time the need for higher education would not only become a desire but a necessity to compete with countries abroad who had a reputable history of established institutions of higher learning. The U.S. would need to build the foundation of

a new country with educated individuals who were willing and able to lead the future generations of this nation (Garis, 1927), and immigration was an instrument for building this human foundation.

The next half-century would be rather turbulent for immigration and human migration in the U.S. Throughout the 1800s Congress would ratify the laws regarding naturalization and in 1808 foreign slave trade became illegal. The Native Americans would be forced from their land and, regrettably, the United States saw some of its hardest times during the 1880s. Yet the tide of immigration was not turned back, and still the people came from many places around the world. They migrated, they wished and they hoped for something better than what they had left behind. Movement within the country was also strong. Settlers who had once called the East Coast their home were being encouraged to move west, and with the Homestead Act of 1862 many families began to move to the newly acquired land in the Midwest and beyond. With new settlers came new towns and cities and eventually new institutions of higher education to educate the up and coming generations (Daniels, 2004; Takaki, 1993). This development linked immigration and migration firmly to the development of higher education in the U.S.

With the race to the U.S. West Coast and the development of the territories surrounding what is now California, in the late 1800s Chinese immigration into the country began to increase. However, the states were at that time controlling their own laws on immigration to their territories. It wasn't until the legal case *Henderson v. The Mayor of New York* that occurred between 1875 and 1880 that state immigration law became unconstitutional and immigration saw the first signs of federal control in U.S.

history (Lemay & Barkan, 1999). The precedence of federal immigration laws opened the way for new advancements in influx into the U.S.

Martin and Midgley (2006) report that the Second Wave of immigration occurred between 1820-1860. According to the Ellis Island Foundation, Inc. (2016), this time of industrial revolution brought waves of migrants to American shores. Martin and Midgley attest that between 1820 and 1840 more than 750,000 German, British, and Irish immigrants arrived. Nearly 40% of these immigrants were Irish, particularly those most harshly effected by the famine in Ireland at that time. Many European peasants from Liverpool and Hamburg also left their homes due to changes in land distribution and industrialization. Also in this group of new migrants were many Chinese immigrants who entered by way of San Francisco (Ellis Island Foundation, 2016; Martin & Midgley, 2003).

During this time period, the U.S. economy was strong, and therefore the new inhabitants were welcome and encouraged to come. It wasn't until hard economic times hit that these newly-arrived individuals were accused of stealing jobs and were cast out of society. However, many pro-immigrant Americans stood up and resisted these arguments and proclaimed that immigrants added wealth to the economy and helped the nation grow even stronger (Ellis Island Foundation, 2016).

By the end of the 1800s, several important immigration developments had occurred. Steam power had made the trans-oceanic voyages quicker, and so between the years of 1880 and 1930 more immigrants would arrive, primarily Europeans, more specifically those from Norway. Those coming by way of Ellis Island, mostly Europeans, found the entry into the U.S. quite smooth. However, the Asian experience was much

different. In 1882 Congress passed the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, which strongly restricted immigration from China, influencing the make-up of the overall immigration pattern in the early Twentieth Century (Ellis Island Foundation, 2016).

Throughout the First and Second Waves of immigration, a great many new arrivals had influenced the ethnic and cultural composition of the U.S. population. Ultimately, between 1880 and 1930, more than 27 million people entered the U.S. and added its cultural and economic diversity (Ellis Island Foundation, 2016).

The Third Wave of Immigration lasted from 1880-1914. It started in 1880 when approximately 460,000 immigrants arrived to America. In 1914, the war in Europe began and America saw approximately 1.2 million immigrants enter the country. Martin and Midgley (2006) report that 20 million southern and eastern Europeans settled in the Eastern and Midwestern states and several hundred thousand Asians began to settle in western states during this wave.

After the immigration floods of the first three waves of immigration, the first halt to U.S. immigration was seen during this wartime. In 1914 when World War I was underway, according to Ellis Island records, suspicions of foreign immigrants' allegiance surfaced and laws were passed to limit the flow of immigrants into the country. By the 1930s, the Great Depression had hit and America was doing all it could to keep its current citizens fed and housed. Many immigrants left the U.S. during this period to return to their homeland. Then, during World War II, immigration increased again as new immigrants began to enter the U.S. fleeing Nazi persecution. However, by then the U.S. had a quota system for refugees and few were allowed to enter. President Truman attempted to assist distressed immigrants and pushed for the U.S. Congress to assist those

in need around the world. This ultimately resulted in the passing of the *Displaced Persons Act of 1948*. However, this Act only opened the door to a few hundred new immigrants, and millions more were forced to look elsewhere for sanctuary (Ellis Island Foundation, 2016; Martin and Midgley 2006).

Also in the early 1900's the U.S. began to see a new opportunity for those individuals wanting to seek teachers' education. At that time there were six regional institutions of higher education in Oklahoma: University of Central Oklahoma, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, East Central University, Northeastern State University and Northwestern Oklahoma State University. These schools began as *normal schools* or teacher's colleges designed to provide four years of preparatory study followed by two years of college work toward a teacher certification.

It was also during this time that the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges was formed to govern these universities. 58 years later, in 2006, the board changed it's name to the Regional University System of Oklahoma. According to the RUSO website, the board is currently made up of nine members, eight of which are appointed by the Governor with oversight from the Senate and the ninth is the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Currently all six universities that began in the early 1900's are established universities offering four year degrees with a variety of degree options (RUSO, 2014).

Toward the end of World War II, U.S. immigration policies began to affect the international student sector, which is of specific interest to the present study. At that time, the population of international students coming to the U.S. to study in institutions of

higher education began to grow, and in 1952, the student nonimmigrant F, M and J visa classes were established (National Research Council, 2000). F status students are considered full-time students enrolled in a four-year program at an elementary school, private or public high school, seminary, university, conservatory, or other academic institutions, including language-training program. M visas allow a student to attend a vocational or recognized non-academic institution, other than a language program. J status students are generally considered visiting scholars who will only be conducting research and collaborating with other scholars at a four-year university. Table 2 presents detailed information about F-1, M-1 and J-1 class visas.

Table 2.

Definitions of F-1, M-1 and J-1 Status Visas

F-1 Status Visa	M-1 Status Visa	J-1 Status Visa
Enrolled in an academic program, often with a core curriculum	Are in a vocational program, typically with a core academic curriculum	Individuals approved to participate in work and study based exchange visitors programs on a short-term basis
Eligible for annual vacation	Are not eligible for annual vacation	Summer work travel program (SWT)
Can change their major	Cannot change their program of study	College and university students /internship program
Can transfer anytime during their program or begin a new program after completing one	Can only transfer in the first six months after arrival in must apply to US citizenship And immigration services for transfer	Professors and research scholars
Can work during and after their program of study with permission	Can only work after their program of study ends and with permission	Camp counselors
Can participate in up to four types of work including on-campus off-campus for economic hardship	Can participate in one type of work, practical training (PT), one month for every four months of their	Physicians and teachers

curricular practical training (CRP) and optional practical training (OPT)	program	
Can remain in the United States for the duration of their program of study	Can only remain in the United States for up to one year unless they apply for an extension	Trainees and specialists
Can stay in the United States for up to 60 days after their program or OPT end date	Can stay in the United States for up to 30 days after their program or PT end date.	Au pairs – a young adult lives with a host family for 12 months and experiences US culture while providing childcare and taking courses at accredited U.S. post-secondary institution

Note. Adapted from Department of State Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs Study in the States F& M Student Status: Know the Difference Info-graphic, 2015.

In the mid 1960s, America saw one of the greatest immigration reforms that was realized from the highest of leadership and respected globally. John F. Kennedy expressed the importance of immigrants to the U.S. and his book *A Nation of Immigrants* was a poignant piece to guide future policies regarding immigration; more definitively Kennedy’s policy called for a three part restructuring that established equal entry to those seeking to migrate to the U.S. The three criteria included:

- Skill based (of the individual immigrant)
- Reunification of families
- Priority- first come first served (Kennedy, 1964)

Kennedy called for replacement to the quota system that had been in place since 1924 and with the new *Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965* the U.S. saw the Fourth Wave of Immigration. This group started largely with those specifically from Asia. Census records show that the Asian population in the U.S. during this time quadrupled (Ellis Island Foundation, 2016).

With the new laws in place, individuals were not given priority based on the country they came from, but whether or not they had relatives already living in the U.S. Currently, the U.S. sees approximately one million immigrants arriving annually and from countries across the globe. These developments affected the size and composition of the population of international students in America, which is the general population of interest to the present study.

Post 9/11 Effects on Immigration and International Study in the States

Prior to September 11, 2001, the United States was experiencing successive waves of student migration into its institutions of higher education; however, since the 9/11 attacks, the country has made it more difficult for international students to get into the U.S. and consequently into its institutions of higher education. After the attacks the United States saw the largest reorganization of the federal government since World War II. On October 29, 2001, President George W. Bush issued a Presidential Directive stating:

The United States has a long and valued tradition of welcoming immigrants and visitors. But the attacks of September 11, 2001, showed that some come to the United States to commit terrorist acts, raise funds for illegal terrorist activities, or to provide other support for terrorist operations, here and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to work aggressively to prevent aliens who engage in or support terrorist activity from entering the United States and to detain, prosecute, or deport any such aliens who are within the United States (p. 1).

After the attacks and this directive, it was clear there would be changes. From bureaucracy modifications, immigration policies and restructured nationality-based

interviewing and screening to the development of interoperable databases and systems, the government experienced a full overhaul within the realm of immigration and border control. The U.S. also saw an increase in information sharing across federal, state, and local law enforcement offices and across international agencies including intelligence and government organizations (Mittelstadt, Speaker, Meissner and Chishti, 2011; Szelényi, 2006).

According to a report from the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Commerce, Defense, Energy, Homeland Security, State, and Central Intelligence Agency in 2004, this rise in precautions regarding international student entry is partly because of the concern that they may receive training in sensitive U.S. civilian and military technology fields. However, some have argued that restricting the mobility of international students seeking education in the U.S. negatively affects expertise across educational fields, particularly STEM research, as well as American leadership presence (Perry, 2003; Peri, 2010).

Adamson (2006) related immigration/migration policy to national security concerns. She suggested that U.S. international security has moved international migration to the top of its agenda and that there are close links between migration policy and national security. She further proposed that, “International security scholars and policymakers are finding it increasingly difficult to ignore the relationship between migration and security” (p. 167). Adamson also noted that since 9/11, migration has been classified into three main categories:

1. Voluntary migration, which is migration by individuals who have left their homes to pursue personal enrichment, economic opportunities or reunite with their families,
2. Forced migration, which relates to individuals such as refugees and displaced persons, and
3. Involuntary migration, which is found in areas such as trafficking, deportation or ethnic cleansing.

The remainder of this literature review will highlight *voluntary migration* as defined above by Adamson (2006).

Another important fact relevant to immigration policy that has emerged in the post-9/11 era is that the U.S. and Europe have set increasingly high standards on the policing of borders and enhanced the use of technology to monitor and regulate the borders. For example, Adamson (2006) reported that in 1993 the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and in 2003 the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service tripled their budgets. The U.S. also added multiple layers of departments such as Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to its repertoire of enhanced security protocol to protect borders and ports of entry (Department of State, 2016; Hesson, 2012).

A government website described post-9/11 U.S. actions, reporting that

“... 11 days after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge was appointed as the first Director of the Office of Homeland Security (DHS) in the White House. The office oversaw and coordinated a comprehensive national strategy to safeguard the country against terrorism and respond to any future attacks” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2016).

The following year, in November 2002, Congress passed the *Homeland Security Act* and DHS formally became a cabinet-level department and officially opened its doors on March 1, 2003. Over the past 13 years DHS has developed its program and agenda and has increased accountability and implemented recommendations after the *9/11 Commission Act of 2007* (Department of Homeland Security, 2016). Defensive developments such as these have affected U.S. immigration policy in the years after 9/11 (Department of State, 2016).

After the attacks, insecurity was a common feeling among law-makers, government officials, and law-enforcement agencies. Tirman (2006) notes, that one of the main groups of people to be scrutinized during this time were Muslims both foreign born and American alike. He stated that not only the Muslim people, but their institutions were put under the microscope. He points out that student visas were more difficult to obtain and the climate on campuses across the U.S. became tense, stating:

The rationale for the US government action was that these people potentially support terrorism. Yet we know, through the Report of the 9/11 Commission, that there were no domestic conspiracies of any significance at the time of the attacks...(Tirman, 2006, p.2).

During this same time period in 2003, agencies relevant to U.S. immigration monitoring and control were housed within the Department of Homeland Security, one of which was the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement also known as ICE. In the interest of national security and public safety, ICE was approved to have a multidimensional and exclusive combination of civil and criminal authorities related to immigration. Today ICE employs more than 20,000 agency workers and has a presence in all 50 states and 48 foreign countries (Immigration and Custom Enforcement, 2015).

With the creation of ICE, also came the development of the Student and Exchange Visitors Program (SEVP), which is overseen by ICE. This program has direct relationship to international student entry to the U.S. SEVP is a part of the National Security Investigations Division whose main focus is on individuals seeking non-immigrant status to study as a student in the U.S. This office primarily connects government organizations with the students to verify their intent on coming to the U.S. and identifies a reasonable time for doing so. SEVP works primarily with non-immigrant students who hold or wish to obtain F and M class visas. The U.S. offers several types of non-immigrant visa categories. As previously stated, F status is given to students wanting to attend a four-year university as a full-time student; however, M status is given to students wanting to attend a two-year technical or vocational school. Students and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was created by SEVP to track and monitor schools, international students, and exchange visitor programs while students are visiting the U.S. and participating in the American education system (SEVP, 2016).

As of November 2015, SEVIS reported in its *General Summary Quarterly Review* that there were 1.2 million F-visa and M-visa students studying in the U.S. and 8803 U.S. schools were certified by SEVP to enroll international students (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2015). The following section will further breakdown the numbers and identify the current logistics of international student mobility.

Current Logistics of International Student Mobility in the U.S.

Immigration and trans-national movement for the purpose of higher education are not uncommon. Over ten years ago Altbach (2004) reported that there were approximately 2 million students around the world studying outside their home countries,

and further projected that number would increase to 8 million in 2025. In Altbach's study, he pointed out that the U.S. is the most sought-after destination for international student migration and that it was discovered in a review conducted a few years ago that annually 586,000 international students enrolled in institutions of higher education and contributed \$12 billion dollars to the U.S. economy. He reported that India, China, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan were the top contributors of international students in the U.S. to date in 2014, with India surpassing China in the 2001-2002 academic year (Altbach, 2004). In more recent studies such as the Open Doors report released by the Institute of International Education in 2014 and 2015 showed Saudi Arabia and China on the rise and expected to send more students in the upcoming year (Open Doors, 2014, 2015).

De Wit, Ferencz, and Rumbley (2013) agree with these numbers and believe "the most striking trend in international student mobility over the past forty years is the increase in the number of globally circulating students, from approximately 250,000 up to an estimated 3.7 million at present" (p.1).

De Wit et al. divide the traditional Fourth Wave of Immigration into three smaller *mobility waves*:

- First Mobility Wave - 1975-1985 – 30% increase from 800,000 to 1,000,000
- Second Mobility Wave - 1989 to 1994 - 34% increase from 1,000,000 to 1,340,000
- Third Mobility Wave - 1999 to 2004 – 4% increase from 1,340,000 to 1,393,600

To date it can be seen that the increase of international students is steadily rising each year Choudaha, Chang and Kono (2013) believe it is in a constant state of flux. They believe that this flux is influenced by external factors that are beyond the

control of the higher education institutions. Furthermore, they list several reasons for the changes in the student mobility landscape:

- demographics
- economic growth and decline
- expansion of local higher education systems
- immigration policies and regulatory environments of competing host countries
- government initiated scholarship programs
- emergence of technology-enabled alternatives like MOOCs

As stated in the previous section, as of November 2015, SEVIS reported that 1.2 million F and M visa international students were studying in the U.S. Of these students 974,926 were studying within the higher education system a 10% increase from the year before. Open Doors 2015 reports that in the 2013/2014 academic year, there were 886,052 studying in the U.S., an 8.1% increase from the 819,644 who studied here in the 2012/2013 academic year. Further reports have shown that there are 466,900 F and M students studying within the STEM fields in the U.S., which is equivalent to 39% of all F and M students (Open Doors, 2015). Approximately 52% of all F and M students enrolled in K-12 programs of study are from China and 11% are from South Korea (SEVP, 2015). SEVP (2015) reported that compared to July 2015, the total number of active F and M students studying in the U.S. increased by 13.3% from 1,054,505 students in July, 2015 to 1,194,780 in November, 2015. These numbers document the reality that the international community on American campuses is on the rise and is likely to steadily increase over the next several years as was previously forecasted by Altbach's (1995) study (Open Doors, 2015).

In addition, although the topic of foreign-born workers in America has caused some controversy in recent years, in fact, this topic has been very controversial in the 2016 Presidential Debate. Economic research conducted by Borjas (2006), Card (2001, 2007, 2009) and Card and Lewis (2007) as cited by Peri (2010) has shown that after analyzing the labor market, there has not been significant data to back up the claim that immigrants are making any impact on net job growth for U.S.-born workers. Foreign-born workers or college students who have graduated from a U.S. university and want to attain a job in the U.S. must complete Optical Practical training (OPT), followed by the acquisition of an H1-B visa to work post graduation. Some students use this as a stepping-stone to ultimately attain citizenship. Some potential presidential candidates are in favor of the program and attest that it brings economic growth to the country; however, others argue it takes jobs away from current citizens of the U.S.

To support the claim that international migration to U.S. institutions of higher education is a positive endeavor, Open Doors reported in 2015 that of the 9,928 international students studying in the state of Oklahoma, the estimated foreign students expenditures in the state was \$260,234,719. Further reports indicate the following statistics in the State. Table 3 shows the numbers of foreign students in Oklahoma, and Table 4 shows countries of origin for those students.

Table 3

Institutions with the Highest Number of Foreign Students in the State of Oklahoma

Institution	City	Total
Oklahoma State University - Main Campus	Stillwater	2,362

University of Oklahoma - Norman Campus	Norman	2,171
University of Central Oklahoma	Edmond	1,522
University of Tulsa	Tulsa	1,353
Oklahoma City University	Oklahoma City	454

Note. Adapted from Open Doors Report 2015

Table 4

Leading Places of Origin of Foreign Students in the State of Oklahoma

Rank	Place of Origin	% Total
1	China	22.8
2	India	12.1
3	Saudi Arabia	12.1
4	South Korea	5.5
5	Nepal	4.4

Note. Adapted from Open Doors Report 2015

As these tables indicate, at least one RUSO School, The University of Central Oklahoma, made the top five list of institutions with highest number of international students in Oklahoma. Across the RUSO system statistics are similar regarding leading places of origin for foreign students in the state, in particular the top three of China, India and Saudi Arabia (Open Doors, 2015).

Peri (2010) supported the economic value of *student migration* in a press release from the Immigration Policy Center and the American Immigration Council. He asserted that empirical evidence shows immigrants are not the cause for unemployment, but they

actually create jobs through the buying of goods and services, entrepreneurship and ultimately their purchasing power that is key in building the U.S. economy. Wei (2012), also reported that international students inflow to a country have a positive correlation with it's trade volume in goods. The most recent Open Doors 2015 report said, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, international students contributed \$30 billion to the U.S. Economy in 2014 (Open Doors, 2015).

Table 5., as reported by NAFSA and Open Doors (2015), displays the top five states total contribution, enrollment and number of jobs created from the migration of international students to the designated state and it also includes Oklahoma and the surrounding states to compare enrollment and contribution to the surrounding Midwestern states.

Table 5

Benefits from International Students Migrating to the U.S.

State	Enrollment 2014-2015	Total Contribution	# of Jobs created/ supported	Population of the State as of 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau / World Bank)
Top Five				
California	135,130	\$4.6 billion	52,624	38 million
New York	106,758	\$3.7 billion	43,865	19.75 million
Texas	75,588	\$1.7 billion	21,524	26.96 million
Massachusetts	55,447	\$2.2 billion	29,009	6.745 million
Illinois	46,574	\$1.4 billion	20,881	12.88 million
Midwest				
Missouri	21,703	\$615.1 million	7,200	6.064 million
Kansas	12,020	\$277.6 million	2,755	2.904 million

Colorado	10,800	\$352 million	5,043	5.356 million
Oklahoma	9,928	\$260.2 million	2,836	3.878 million
Arkansas	5,918	\$164.1 million	1,411	2.966 million

Note. Table adapted from NAFSA and Open Doors Report 2015

As this data shows, international student migration to American institutions of higher education can provide substantial return on investment (ROI) to our states' economics. The following section will discuss the theoretical perspectives relating to international student migration to further support the claims that these students offer a multitude of positive outcomes for institutions.

Theoretical Perspectives Relating to International Student Migration/Mobility

After summarizing historical and recent developments in U.S. immigration and international student migration, this literature review next turns to relevant theoretical perspectives. Multiple theories support the working hypothesis that international student migration/mobility (ISM) is an important and widely studied phenomenon in the U.S. and globally. The following sections of this literature review address these theories and how they imply that the study of ISM is rapidly growing and in need of further investigation through research such as the present study.

Theory of Migration

The original theory of migration was developed by Ernest George Ravenstein in 1885. Ravenstein began his life's work as a geographer and cartographer, however he spent less time traveling and more time conducting research concerning the history of geography. Being of German-English decent he was most interested in the migration of those in and around the United Kingdom. Inspired by Dr. William Farr who had once proclaimed that there seemed to be no definite law in the process of migration,

Ravenstein sought to dispel this theory. For his migration study he compared census data gathered between the years of 1871 and 1881 and sought to determine patterns of movement. Eventually he reviewed birthplace data and compared it with the current population of each country. By doing so he began to make inferences and get an overall representation of where people had migrated or stayed in relation to their birthplace. He divided his study participants into three categories (Ravenstein, 1885):

1. Native County element meaning they were born in the county in which they lived.
2. Border element meaning they were born in an adjoining county.
3. Foreign element meaning they were from outside the United Kingdom.

At the center of Ravenstein's migration model or theory were the concepts of *absorption* and *dispersion*. Absorption essentially implies the county took in more people than it gave up. Dispersion reflects the opposite, implying the county gave up more members of its population than what existed at the time (Ravenstein, 1885). The results of Ravenstein's study included 7 laws and were as follows:

1. Most immigrants only proceed a short distance and toward centers of absorption.
2. As migrants move toward absorption centers, they leave gaps that are filled by migrants from more remote districts, creating migration flows that reach to the most remote areas.
3. The process of dispersion is inverse to that of absorption.
4. Each main current of migration produces a compensating countercurrent.
5. Migrants proceeding long distances generally go by preference to one of the

great centers of commerce or industry.

6. The natives of towns are less migratory than those of the rural parts of country.

7. Females are more migratory than males (Ravenstein, 1885).

Massey (2006) suggests that over the years multiple theories and conceptual models concerning migration have surfaced, mostly in relation to labor markets and economic concerns. He asserts that these conceptual models ultimately seek to explain similar claims, but they “...employ radically different concepts, assumptions, and frames of reference” (p. 432). Such frameworks include:

1. Neoclassical Economics, which focuses on wages and employment conditions between countries and migration costs.

2. The New Economics of Migration, which looks at various markets not just labor and views migration as a household decision.

3. Dual Labor Market Theory and World Systems Theory, which incorporates a macro level of thinking that puts the emphasis on “higher levels of aggregation” (p. 432).

Other theorists such as De Wit (2008, 2013) and De Wit, Ferencz and Rumbley (2013) have discussed at length the importance of internationalization within a historical context of higher education, dynamics of international student circulation or ISM in a global context and trends and issues on international student circulation. Not surprisingly, this data collection and research takes place mainly throughout the UK and Australia, two drivers in the ISM research community. De Wit (2013) pointed out that internationalization over the years has moved from a reactive to a pro-active strategic issue and that “increasing competition in higher education and the commercialization and

cross-border delivery of higher education, have challenged the value traditionally attached to cooperation: exchanges and partnerships” (p.1). In noting this, it is significant to point out the trends they suggest are occurring in the realm of higher education. The most prominent trend according to De Wit, Ferencz, and Rumbley (2013) is the sheer increase in numbers of what they call “globally circulating students” (p.1)

They note three separate waves of increase in international degree seeking students globally:

1. 1975-1985 – 30% increase from 800,000 to one million
2. 1989 – 1994 - 34% increase
3. 1999-2004 - 4% (which the drop can be associated with the 9/11 attacks)

De Wit et al. (2013) suggest a fourth wave has occurred over the past five years and has “taken the shape of a tsunami” (p.1). They also point out three equally important factors occurring throughout the ISM community. The first is that larger traditional countries of choice such as the USA, UK and Australia are facing increasing competition from countries such as the Russian Federation, China, Singapore, and Malaysia. Second, they ascertained that highly skilled manpower is becoming a strong push factor, meaning the driver that “pushes” the student out of the country of origin. Third and finally, the cross-border delivery of higher education who offer opportunities for advancement that do not require the student to cross borders (De Wit et. al, 2013)

Interestingly enough, over a century after Ravenstein the interest in international migration still exists, but in a more refined nature. As stated by Massey (2006), theories have evolved over time; however, in the following instance, more apropos and generational language is used. In the subsequent section, a revival of Ravenstein’s Theory

of Migration will be discussed at length, but the terms have been modified to “Push and Pull Factors.”

Push and Pull Factors

Push and pull theory, at close examination, appears to be a revival of Ravenstein’s Migration Theory. The Push Pull Theory first emerged within the business sector among marketing and logistics researchers; however the model has been adapted and utilized by researchers such as Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and is now used within international student mobility (ISM) research (Kahanec & Králiková 2011; King & Raghuram, 2012;) Raghuram, 2012) by applying human capital as the main driver for positive return on investment (ROI). Push Pull theory asserts that factors occur within the country of origin and somehow motivate the students’ decision to study abroad. The Pull factors are present in the host country and encompass the influences that make the particular country attractive to the international student. Both push and pull factors are posited to act jointly upon migration decisions.

A seminal study by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) illustrated push and pull factors in students migration decisions. This study, conducted between the years of 1996 and 2000, examined push/pull factors influencing international students’ destination of choice. Mazzarol and Soutar revealed several key factors in students’ decision to study abroad. One main reason was that their home country did not provide the access to higher education that was available in the United States. This factor was primarily influential for countries in Africa and Asia. The Mazzarol and Soutar study identified six main identifiable push/pull factors that led international students to make a decision to study abroad. These factors included: (a) the importance of knowledge and the awareness of

host country, (b) the importance and recommendations of friends and relatives, (c) cost issues, (d) environment, and (e) social links and (f) geographic proximity (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). These factors and their effects on international student migration decisions are summarized below.

Knowledge of the Host. This factor includes the ability to find the institution of interest and access information regarding the institution. Education standards were shown to be an important component of the factor. If prospective students were able to acquire the knowledge of the host institution regarding whether it was reputable on an international scale, then this played a key role in their decision (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Friends and Family. Literature in the field of international education establishes that word of mouth is a key factor in recruiting student, as this topic is frequently discussed in the body of research. Thus, it is no surprise that this element was found by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) to be one of the factors in the migration decision-making process for international students. Mazzarol and Soutar noted that often friends or family members, such as parents, may have graduated from a particular institution and then encouraged their children or relatives to attend also. This study reported that friends and family had more influences than institutional agents, which appeared to be increasing the way to recruit students in the recent years.

Cost Issue. In particular, cost of living and the ability to find a part time job for many students was valued and reported as influential in the Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) study. They found this consideration was especially important for students from India. Also, what Mazzarol and Soutar called “social cost” such as racial discrimination, crime

and safety was also notably high on the list. Finally, the study showed that an established international population on campus was very influential in the migration decision-making process.

Environment. It was noted by the international students in the Mazzaol and Soutar (2002) study that the attractiveness of Western campuses was a factor that pulled them to one destination over another. Physical external appearance of the institution itself, as well as the learning environments within the classroom setting, was also noted as influential.

Social Links and Geographical Proximity. In the Mazzaol and Soutar (2002) study, this element was generally associated with the ability of international students to live within close proximity to family, friends or relatives. In the case of the Chinese students, it was found to be more likely for them to migrate to places where they had friends or to institutions with a larger number of students from China. These alternatives appears to be more important than locations where the students had family, perhaps because the one-child policy limits the size of a household for many Chinese families. Also, Mazzaol and Soutar noted that prior to 1990 it was nearly impossible for the parents of these now college aged students to study abroad in the United States.

Rational Choice Theory

Haug (2008) described Rational Choice Theory as a leading approach in the field of migration sociology. *Migration* can refer to either a permanent move or a temporary move for educational purposes or workforce development (International Organization for Migration, 2014). Within this line of thought is the idea that there are two main perspectives in the decision- making process by the decision maker. These two

perspectives can be identified as the macro and micro levels of modeling. Macro refers to the bigger picture. It can be linked to an older theory of international migration that focused primarily on labor migration. It suggests that international migrants move to areas or countries that have higher wages and migrate out of areas that have low wages. It has more to do with the big picture or larger view of the country or specific location the migrant is moving. Micro, on the other hand, refers to a more personal level of decision-making. This suggests the individual actors decide to migrate due to an availability to be most productive given their skill set. It focuses more closely on human capital and the net return to the individual (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, & Taylor, 1993).

Haug explained that the individual's behavior could explain the migration process. Furthermore, Esser asserted (as cited in Haug, 2008) that rational choice is influenced by the economic approach and by behavioral decision theory in social psychology. Esser claims that, "... the core of rational choice theory is the subjective expected utility model" (as cited in Haug, 2008, p.586)

Haug (2008) claimed that in regard to migration as a logical action, the motivation is to maximize the person's net benefits. She posited that human capital is highly regarded as a determining factor in decisions relating to migration whether temporary or permanent. Ultimately, she claimed, "... migration takes place when a comparison of the outcomes of either staying at the place of origin or at the place of destination reveals the latter alternative to be more attractive" (p. 587). Thus, rational choice theory suggests that individual choices regarding human migration decisions are predicated on the decisions of individuals regarding where they perceive their most beneficial alternative to lie. It

further implies that these decisions and migration choices are systematic and are products of considered choices based on personal perceptions of maximizing one's human capital.

Choice Theory

Choice theory was developed by psychologist William Glasser (1998) and proposes that humans are internally not externally motivated. He points out that there are essentially five basic needs in life:

- **Survival** (food clothing, shelter, breathing, personal safety and others)
- **Love** (belonging and connecting)
- **Power** (significance and competence)
- **Freedom** (autonomy)
- **Fun** (learning and enjoyment of life)

This model is analogous to Maslow's well-known Hierarchy of Needs, applied specifically to making choices in decision-making behavior. It suggests that humans are internally motivated to make their own decisions based on their personal needs. It further indicates that although there may be factors that push or pull individuals to make a decision, they ultimately are the decision makers. Glasser suggested there is a Quality World that individuals alone can create through choice. Choice theory can be related to personal motivations and decisions regarding international student migration that go beyond push and pull factors and focus on internal needs and perceptions of what one sees as best for oneself.

Summary and Conclusion

This review of literature has summarized historical immigration and migration in the U.S., immigration developments in the post-9/11 era, current logistics in international

student mobility in the U.S., and theoretical perspectives related to international student immigration and mobility. Having examined this literature, the study will next move forward to Chapter III to describe the methodology used in the present study to address gaps in the literature related specifically to the state of Oklahoma. Specifically, the methodology reported in Chapter III will examine reasons why international students are choosing to study in universities associated with the Regional University System of Oklahoma.

After the study's methodology is described in Chapter III, its findings will be reported in Chapter IV. Finally, the study's conclusions and recommendations will be reported in Chapter V.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011) identified two types of approaches one must decide upon for conducting a research study: *typology-based approach*, which “emphasizes the classification of useful mixed methods designs and the selection and adaptation of a particular design to a study’s purpose and questions” (p. 55) and *dynamic approaches*, which “focus on a design process that considers and interrelates multiple components of research design rather than placing emphasis on selecting an appropriate design from an existing typology” (p. 59). This research study utilized a *complementarity typology-based approach* as defined in Tashakkori and Teddlie’s (2006) *Educational Research Discipline*. It implemented a mixed methods (MM) design approach with a QUAL→QUAN method.

As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to examine factors that contribute to a decision by international students who chose to study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO). The researcher chose to utilize RUSO for purposive and practical reasons, including institutional and personal research

interests. The intent of this exploratory sequential design was to first qualitatively explore with a small sample and then determine through quantitative methods if the qualitative findings generalize to a larger sample of the population.

The first phase of the study was a qualitative exploration of factors that contributed to a decision by a small sample of international students who chose to study within RUSO. For this phase of the study interview data was collected from international students studying at Northeastern State University on the Tahlequah campus. From this preliminary investigation, the qualitative discoveries were used to develop quantitative measures that were administered to a larger sample of the population. In the quantitative phase, online surveys were collected from international students studying in RUSO schools throughout Oklahoma: Northeastern State University, University of Central Oklahoma, East Central University, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, and Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the exploratory sequential design is a two-phase mixed methods study that includes four major steps (see Figure 3). It begins by organizing and prioritizing the collection of qualitative data first and then building from that data followed by a second phase that is conducted utilizing quantitative research to test the qualitative findings. "The primary purpose of the exploratory sequential design is to generalize qualitative findings based on a few individuals in the first phase to a larger sample gathered during the second phase" (p. 86). Ultimately, the first phase developed and informed the second phase (Greene, Carcelli and Graham, 1989).

This study utilized the exploratory sequential design *study* for the purpose of developing a framework and defining variables, which are two primary reasons that Creswell and Plano-Clark outline as reasons to utilize this type of study (2011).

Table 6

Exploratory Sequential Framework Design Process

Phase 1		Phase 2	
Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
QUAL data collection	QUAL data analysis/instrument development	QUAN data collection	QUAN data analysis/interpretation of results

Note. Adaptation by the researcher from Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011). Diagram of the Exploratory Sequential Design, including 2 phases and 4 internal steps.

The first phase of this type of study helped identify important variables that subsequently studied quantitatively and "explore(d) a phenomenon in depth and measure(d) the prevalence of its dimensions" (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011, p. 87). Because the exploratory design begins qualitatively, the research problem and purpose emphasize a qualitative strand; therefore this research utilized a constructivist approach during the first phase to value multiple perspectives and deeper understanding. As the research moved to the quantitative phase, the propensity of the study moved to post-positivism, emphasizing the need to identify and measure variables and statistical trends. This allowed for multiple perspectives within this study and had a tendency to change throughout (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). There are four major steps within the exploratory sequential design study, as shown in Table 6. According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011) in phase one, the first step was to design and implement the qualitative strand which involved stating the qualitative research questions and

determining the approach, obtaining permissions, identifying the qualitative sample, collecting open-ended data with protocols and analyzing the qualitative data that eventually established theme development and organized information in order to inform the next phase of the study. Step two, also in phase one, involved utilizing strategies that built upon the qualitative results. This step refined the qualitative research questions and mixed methods questions, decided how the participants were selected for the quantitative segments and allowed for the opportunity to “design and pilot test a quantitative data collection instrument based on qualitative results” (Creswell & Plano-Clark 2011, p. 87). These four steps with a two-phase design are what guided the methodology for this study.

Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative data collection phase began with a set of structured interview questions that collected demographic data from a small purposive sample of (6) international students at Northeastern State University and obtain permissions from each student to audio-tape the interview for future transcription. The informed consent (Appendix K) stated that by detaching the front page of the informed consent from the demographic survey, this was their consent to move forward and agree to the terms of the confidential interview. The researcher originally asked 10 students to participate in the Qualitative study: 5 female and 5 male. Of the 10, 6 students agreed to participate. Reasons students chose not to participate are unknown, but could be due to cultural reasons unforeseen by the researcher. Following the demographic data collection, the interview moved to a more open format where the researcher began with semi-structured questions and allowed the students to speak freely about their experiences prior to moving to the United States to study. As stated earlier, the interviews were audio taped

and utilized at a later date for transcription with the use of the qualitative software tool NVivo to store the uploaded field notes and transcriptions. Prior to the first interview, a pilot test of the questions was given to a fluent English-speaking international student for testing the preliminary structured and semi-structured interview questions. Subsequently, follow-up interviews were discussed after the initial interviews for clarification or further exploration into answers given by the participants; however, none were scheduled.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data consists of transcribed interviews and field notes that had been initially keyed into the researcher's computer and stored on an external hard drive kept in a lock box in the researcher's home. Data analysis took place concurrently throughout the qualitative research process. Whereas quantitative research data analysis normally takes place after the data is collected, during a qualitative study the data analysis occurs as the research is taking place. During this data analysis, the researcher gave pseudonyms to participants to protect their anonymity and began to code the collected data as soon as all the interviews were concluded.

According to Saldana (2009), "Just as a title represents and captures a book or film or poem's primary content and essence, so does a code represent and capture a datum's primary content and essence" (p. 3). During the coding process it was important for the researcher to begin to recognize and note Descriptive Code. During this activity, in the margin to the right of a phrase or statement, the researcher wrote one or more words to sum up the main idea of the section of text. According to Saldana (2009) this process is not to reduce the data, but to summarize or condense it. It was important in this phase to be very analytical or as Saldana refers to it, to use your "analytic lens" (p. 6).

After this process took place, the next step was to codify the data by arranging it in systematic order to classify each emergent theme that was used to create the instrument for phase two of this mixed method study. Once the data was codified, it was organized into categories with supplemental headings that outlined and organized the planned instrument. As Saldana (2009) stated, qualitative research is a meticulous method and requires attention to detail and language and will require deep reflection over and again on emergent patterns. During Second Cycle and even possibly Third Cycle Coding, themes were re-evaluated and reorganized. During this process Nvivo was utilized to assist the researcher in organization and theme building. However, the researcher relied more heavily on printed out manuscripts with personal notes than the computer software.

Quantitative Data Collection

The final two steps of this exploratory design process involved implementation of the quantitative phase, as well as interpretation and connection of the results of both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. Step three was the design and implementation phase of the Quantitative Strand. This was the time the researcher obtained her additional permissions to implement the second phase by submitting a revised Modification Request to Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board; as well as, selected the quantitative sample size for collecting closed-ended data. This phase involved the statement of the quantitative research questions or directional hypotheses that built upon the qualitative results and guided the quantitative approach to complete this part of the study. The question that the quantitative phase poses is: “To what extent and in what ways do the quantitative results generalize or test the qualitative results?” (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011, p. 87). Quantitative survey questions were

subsequently developed from the qualitative interviews, as well as, from the exhaustive literature review. An online instrument was developed using the Qualtrics system that included a demographics section, English language component, as well as decision-making portion. The survey, developed by the researcher, was submitted to the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board for approval and to revise the previously approved IRB for this study. Themes that emerged from the qualitative data collection (N=6) and literature review, specifically those relating to safety, quality of education, and a better way of life for family, were later found by the researcher to have also been included on a survey distributed to international students in Canada (Canada Bureau for International Education, 2009).

Once the researcher's survey was approved and the IRB updated, the survey was then distributed to each RUSO school's International Director or equivalent who held the international student listserv for their campus. That individual distributed the email (see Appendix M) provided by the Researcher and the link to the Qualtrics survey.

This portion of the study utilized survey research since according to Urdan (2010) and Salkind (2011) this method is best used for large samples, the use of questionnaires and surveys, and statistical analysis of numerical data. The sample (N=139) included students from the RUSO schools stated previously who met the criteria for this study. During this phase the researcher gained understanding involving the effects of previously-discovered factors, determined in the qualitative phase of the study, on decision making of international students to choose to study at RUSO schools in Oklahoma. In this research phase, the independent variables were the qualitatively-discovered factors and the dependent variable was the effects on decisions by the students

to choose RUSO. The survey questions employed multiple choice questions, and rating and ranking questions utilizing a 5-point Likert-type scale that determined whether the qualitatively-determined factors had stronger or weaker influences on the students' decision to study in Oklahoma.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The fourth and final phase of the study interpreted and connected the results of both the qualitative and quantitative strands. This phase incorporated a summary and interpretation of the qualitative results, a summary and interpretation of the quantitative results, and discussion of the data application to answer the quantitative question, "To what extent and in what ways do the quantitative results generalize or test the qualitative results" (Creswell & Plano-Clark 2011, p. 87). This phase used the results from the Qualtrics software program for data analysis. It included descriptive statistics that described the characteristics of the sample and also applied inferential statistics to "make inferences about the characteristics of the population the sample is alleged to represent" (Urduan, 2010, p. 60). The data was also analyzed by using rating and ranking statistical techniques to determine which decision-making factors were rated and ranked as top motivators by the international students to choose the RUSO schools.

Sampling

In this study sequential mixed-method (MM) sampling was utilized. According to Teddlie and Yu (2007), this "involve(d) the selection of units of analysis for a MM study through sequential use of probability and purposive sampling strategies (QUAN-QUAL), or vice versa (QUAL-QUAN)" (p. 89). This study used the QUAL-QUAN technique. Kemper, Stringfield and Teddlie (2003) suggested that the first qualitative phase of the

study that used a purposive sampling procedure was often required to create or enhance an instrument to distribute to the larger sample that utilized the probability sampling procedure in the quantitative portion of the study. The first phase of this research took place on the campus of Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where the researcher used purposive sampling to interview a small group of international students (N=6) who chose to study at this particular RUSO school. This RUSO school was chosen because of the accessibility of the researcher to the student population. In this phase, the first two aforementioned steps to the four-step process took place. Purposive sampling was used here because the researcher had prior knowledge of the actual population and the purpose of the study. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) stated that purposive sampling techniques involve selecting certain units or cases “based on a specific purpose rather than randomly” (p. 713). Teddlie and Yu (2007) pointed out that many other researchers such as Kuzel (1992), LeCompte and Preissle (1993), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Patton (2002) have also utilized purposive sampling in mixed method research to attain results in their studies.

There are three main types of purposive sampling: sampling to achieve representativeness or comparability, sampling special or unique cases, and sequential sampling. This particular study used purposive sampling to achieve representativeness or comparability. Because the researcher has access to the population of the individuals being studied, this type of sampling was desirable in that it fit the definition given by Teddlie and Yu (2007, p. 80) which stated that this type of “purposive sampling techniques involves two goals:

- Sampling to find instances that are representative or typical of a particular type of case on a dimension of interest, and
- Sampling to achieve comparability across different types of cases on a dimension of interest.”

In the qualitative portion of this study, the researcher purposively chose six (N=6) international students who chose to study at Northeastern State University (NSU), a RUSO school. The individuals were chosen based on the following criteria: (a) The participants are current students at NSU or recently graduated within the last 24 months; (b) they represent multiple geographical groups and countries; and (c) they were able to comprehend the English language at a sufficient level to conduct a conversational face-to-face interview with the researcher. These dialogues took place individually on or near the campus at a location of the participants choice. Each individual was asked to sit down with the researcher in a convenient location on or near campus to conduct the face-to-face interviews.

In the second phase of this study, the quantitative phase, the researcher moved into step three of the four step previously discussed process of the exploratory sequential design study. It was appropriate at this time to receive further approval from the IRB to conduct this portion of the study. Once necessary permissions were obtained, in this phase the researcher used the survey developed from the initial qualitative phases of this study to distribute to a larger sample of the population. This portion of the research utilized probability sampling by implementing random sampling techniques to the RUSO international student population. The goal of phase two was to address quantitatively the sentiments of international students regarding the relative influences of factors that led

them to decide to study and complete their degrees within a RUSO school. These surveys were developed and distributed via the online survey tool Qualtrics. The researcher sent an email to a designated school administrator on each campus, such as Executive Director of International Programs, who had access to an international student listserv; at which time, the administrator distributed the email to the international student community. The researcher collected the data via email and the Qualtrics system and compiled the data into SPSS software.

Appropriateness of Mixed Methods for this Study

According to Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, and Collins (2009), mixed methods studies have become increasingly more popular among researchers in the last 25 years and have “developed a long way since Campbell and Fiske (1959) coined the term *multiple operationalism*” (p. 115). The appropriateness of mixed methods for this study had multiple dimensions. Essentially, it can be said that simply interviewing a small number of students from one institution would not yield adequate data to answer the larger question of whether or not the sentiments are comparable across the state institutions in the RUSO system. Decision-making factors for NSU students may or may not reflect those of all RUSO students. The goals of this study were to first determine a list of factors that led international students to choose this region of the United States to study (i.e. theory forming) and then to substantiate whether or not this information is transferable to a larger sample of Oklahoma RUSO students statewide, (i.e. theory testing). The mixed methods research design proposed for this study enables both these goals.

The qualitative components of this study contributed rich detailed answers to open ended interview questions to determine what specifically the factors were that led these students to make the decision to study in regional universities in Oklahoma. Qualitative research can be divided into two prominent types: participant observation and in-depth interviewing. This study utilized in-depth interviewing with open-ended questions to gather detailed information about the events leading up to the international students' decision to leave their homes abroad to study here in the United States, particularly in Oklahoma. This allowed the individuals to answer personally from their own point of view rather than being limited to closed-ended prepared questions. In this research technique the participants expressed themselves spontaneously without restrictions. By listening to the participants in the study, the researcher had the opportunity to hear the voices of the students and discover meaningful background regarding why they made their decisions. This was an opportunity to allow similarities in answers between participants to develop naturally and themes to emerge from the rich personal data that is collected.

Merriam (2009) explained that qualitative research would prefer to understand “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5) than “...determine cause and effect, predicting or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population” (p. 5). The former was key in the qualitative initial phase of this research before moving to the second quantitative phase, which focused on predicting or analyzing distribution of attributes in a larger sample. The researcher first identified the how and why. In this study the

researcher was the principal instrument of data collection in the opening qualitative phase.

The quantitative phase of this study was appropriate for determining whether the qualitative data was transferable to a larger sample of the population. Larger-scale quantitative data was important to this study for the growth and development of the international student population of RUSO schools to determine future recruitment efforts to increase the international student population to build a greater global competency on our Oklahoma campuses.

In summary, the exploratory sequential mixed-methods design integrated and blended qualitative and quantitative research methods and components that contributed to the overall validity of this study, making it stronger and more complete. Utilizing qualitative and quantitative data allowed the opportunity to fully address the research problem both inductively and deductively to identify generalizable decision-making factors in international students to attend RUSO schools.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview of the Study

As described in Chapter I, the purpose of this study was to examine and describe factors that contributed to a decision by international students who choose to study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO). This research purpose is relevant and timely, in that recruitment and retention are key factors for administrators and faculty working to build these programs within the RUSO system. The following research questions were used to guide the study, which used an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design:

1. What is the demographic profile of international students currently studying or who have studied in RUSO schools in the past 24 months?
2. How were the students informed about study abroad opportunities in the U.S. and Oklahoma?
3. What factors influenced the international students' decision to attend a RUSO school?
4. Are the decision-making factors identified in a small number of qualitative interviews of international students generalizable to a larger sample of the population of RUSO international students and do common patterns and influences emerge?

As stated by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the exploratory sequential design process is a two-phase mixed methods study that includes four major steps (see Table 6 in Chapter III). It begins by organizing and prioritizing the collection of qualitative data first and then building from that data followed by a second phase that is conducted utilizing quantitative research to test the qualitative findings. "The primary purpose of the exploratory sequential design is to generalize qualitative findings based on a few individuals in the first phase to a larger sample gathered during the second phase" (p. 86). Ultimately, the first phase develops and informs the second phase (Greene, Carcelli and Graham, 1989). Applying this two-stage model, this chapter is divided into two parts and presents both qualitative and quantitative data collection findings. Part one includes rich descriptions of the six participants from a single school in the initial qualitative phase of this study and part two includes a detailed analysis of quantitative data utilizing the information gathered from a survey of 139 participants from the multiple RUSO schools.

Data and findings presented in this Chapter address each of the study's two phases and four research questions. Presentation begins with a description of the qualitative phase of the study and its participants and results. This phase was used to guide development of the survey instrument used in phase two. Phase two findings were then used to address research questions 1, 2, and 3. Finally, the results of phases one and two were integrated to address research question 4.

Qualitative Phase Results

The first qualitative phase of this research took place on the campus of Northeastern State University (NSU) in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where the researcher used purposive sampling to interview a small group of international students (N=6) who chose

to study at this particular RUSO school. Purposive convenience sampling and this particular RUSO school were chosen because of the accessibility of the researcher to the student population and since the researcher had prior knowledge of the actual population.

The original data collection consisted of transcribed interviews and field notes that had been initially keyed into the researcher’s computer and stored on an external hard drive kept in a lock box in the researcher’s home. Data analysis took place concurrently throughout the qualitative research process.

Before reporting the results of this phase of the study, it is first appropriate to describe the participants. The diversity of the participants is outlined in the Table 7. To protect their anonymity, pseudonyms were used to replace all of the participants’ names and any name associated with the participant. All participants were interviewed individually in a convenient public space of their choice either on campus or near campus.

Table 7

Participants’ Self Reported Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Age Range	Degree Level	Housing	Country of Origin
Dave	M	18-25	Bachelor	Off campus	Saudi Arabia
Gwen	F	18-25	Bachelor	Off campus	Serbia
Sammy	M	18-25	Bachelor	Dorms	United Arab Emirates (UAE)
Chris	M	36-45	Master	Off campus	India
Billy	M	36-45	Master	Off campus	Brazil
Glenn	M	18-25	Bachelor	Off campus	Finland

A summation of this data indicates that, of the six participants, five were male and one was female. Ages of the participants ranged from 18-40 years. Four participants identified themselves as undergraduate students pursuing Bachelor's degrees and two identified themselves as graduate students pursuing a Master's degrees. Five students declared they live off campus in either an apartment or house and one participant lives in the dorms on campus. The Participants were interviewed in a convenient public space of their choice either on campus or near campus. The participants came from a variety of countries in the Mid East, Asia, South America, and Europe.

Participants' Backgrounds

Dave

Dave is from Saudi Arabia and was interviewed in the library on the NSU Tahlequah campus. He grew up in the Eastern part of Saudi Arabia and was working the night shift at a job when he said he decided he wanted to do something more with his life. Typically working the night shift, it was also very common for Dave to work 14 hours each shift. He recalls feeling very sleepy and in his words "a slave for the company because my life was only work and sleep and that is all." He decided he was tired of working so hard and so many hours, yet not making very much money. He told himself he knew he wanted to study abroad but wasn't sure where he wanted to go. At this point in his life he wanted to go anywhere other than where he was at that moment.

He was 20 years old at the time and he went home that night and told his father he wanted to study out of his country. His father was supportive and they began researching places around the world. Dave mentioned that he had many friends who were studying in the United States and in Canada and he began asking his friends what their opinion was

on the best place to study. Dave wanted to know where the “friendly people” were. He said emphatically, his friends and his cousins said, “America, that is the place you will like best.” Dave knew that they had special offices in his country for individuals who wanted to study abroad. He said, “They help people with acceptance forms, papers and everything that you need to make it easy for a person to study abroad.” His father told him he knew a lady who worked with universities to help Saudi students find a school that was right for them, get visa paper work filed and connect them with the right people within the university to begin the application process. Dave recalled that the first universities mentioned to him were in places like California and Ohio, but his father was not pleased with these choices. He felt that these areas were too expensive. Dave explained that he came from a very large family and his father was unable to spend that kind of money. They asked his father’s friend to find an area that was inexpensive and the woman told them in Oklahoma there are friendly people and that her son was studying in Oklahoma City. She knew that there were smaller towns throughout Oklahoma and she was very pleased with Northeastern State University. She mentioned that the community was in rural Oklahoma and very safe for international students. This aspect of the school appealed to his father.

Dave was very quick to mention that his first thought when he was making the decision to come to Northeastern State University was that it was inexpensive and he did not want to burden his father with the pressure of paying for a very expensive university in the United States. He felt the decision to attend Northeastern State University was 50% on him and 50% on his father. He knew that his brother would most likely come

with him and that it would be an affordable situation for both. His brother did join him in his studies at the school.

Dave reminisced about his last year in high school and remembered it being a very boring time in his life. He was tired of the same routine every day; he said, “I didn’t feel like I was alive anymore and I started thinking about coming to study somewhere and imagining the time when I received my acceptance letter but as the time would grow closer I started feeling homesick and I wasn’t ready to go anywhere yet.” He was quick to say “But I’m not feeling homesick today!” He enjoys the small town community and the safety that Tahlequah brings, but he is keen to visit larger cities like Los Angeles, New York, and San Diego, he would like to move there some day. All in all, the factors leading up to Dave studying at Northeastern State University encompassed financial affordability, small-town feel and safety.

Gwen

Gwen is originally from Belgrade, Serbia and felt as though her story was traditionally different than many of her fellow international students at her university. She began by explaining that her family moved from their home in Serbia when she was only two years old. She points out they moved around a lot as she was a young child in hopes of finding a safe home to settle in and raise their family. They moved from Hungary to Poland and then the Czech Republic over the course of several years. Gwen recalls attending an international school for the better part of her school-aged life. The American Embassy funded the particular school she attended in the Czech Republic. Many of the students enrolled in the school were American and they expressed to her that they had goals to attend very large universities such as Yale or Harvard; in turn, this

made for a very competitive high school environment. In Gwen's mind, she began to feel that if everyone else in her high school was going to attend an American university then so should she. However, this thought was inconceivable to her parents since they had left Serbia and had used most of their family savings to build a home for themselves in the Czech Republic.

It wasn't until she attended a college fair at her high school that she remembers visiting the University of Virginia's booth and they mentioned they offered scholarships for education. In her mind she was thinking "I'm not so smart this may not be the path for me. I don't believe I am scholarship worthy." Then they mentioned that they also offered sport scholarships and this made her a bit more excited. She asked what types of scholarships they offered in sports and lucky for her tennis was one on the list. She thought in her mind "I've been playing tennis my whole life this could be it for me." She began to think to herself that if she asked her parents to attend the university in the United States they may be against sending her that far away and there may be universities closer that would offer a better education; however, with the availability of a tennis scholarship to pay for her education this may be the only opportunity she would have for her parents to say yes. This would be a win-win situation; her parents would not have to pay for the education and she would be able to travel to the United States as she had always wanted to do.

Originally, she stated she was planning on attending the University of Virginia, but then she became sidetracked by other issues such as, conversations she had with friends and other options she was researching. She began to become concerned with some issues that came up with her playing for a Division 1 (D1) school versus a Division 2

(D2) university. According to the NCAA (2016) the difference between a DI and D2 are as follows:

- Division 1 member institutions - have to sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women) with two team sports for each gender. Each playing season has to be represented by each gender as well. There are contest and participant minimums for each sport, as well as scheduling criteria.
- Division 2 institutions - have to sponsor at least five sports for men and five for women, (or four for men and six for women), with two team sports for each gender, and each playing season represented by each gender. There are contest and participant minimums for each sport, as well as scheduling criteria (p. 1).

In addition to the sport related definitions of these schools there are also academic requirements that are much higher for D1 than D2 and therefore she was afraid she couldn't meet those of the D1 school. She then began researching D2 universities when she came across the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Everything was in place for her to go and she was extremely excited. All in all, she felt a connection there with the coaches and some of the teammates. Her plane ticket was bought and she was packed and ready to go; however, at the last minute the NCAA did not clear her to play. She did not go into detail regarding the situation but was clearly shaken and upset by her missed opportunity to travel to the United States and study. She returned to Serbia and studied at a university there for one year. She describes how difficult that was because she had not originally grown up in Serbia and she was used to living in the Czech Republic around other American students. This was a very trying year for Gwen. However, through a

contact she made while she was there she began corresponding via email with a woman who worked with tennis players attending universities who wanted to study in the United States. She uploaded her resume and tennis videos and the agent sent them out to several D2 universities. She explained that she didn't really know what she was getting into because the response was overwhelming from these universities. She began to get contact after contact from universities wanting her to come play for them. As the time grew closer for her to make a decision she said she began to get very nervous. She was extremely excited to have her dream come true and travel to the United States; however, she was very apprehensive to go so far away from her family for such a long time. She said she actually waited until the very last minute that she could before making a decision, but once she did she was overjoyed with excitement.

When asked specifically why she chose Northeastern State University, Gwen replied:

I definitely feel like it was the coach who reached out to me more than anyone else did. He would call me and check on me and make sure everything was fine and that I was doing okay. He asked if I had any questions that he could answer about the campus or the community. I was so excited to actually speak to one of the girls from the team and she spoke Polish, which is a language that I speak and after that I got really excited!

Gwen found out that there were other girls coming to play for the team from Slovakia and the Czech Republic she knew that there would be girls there who also spoke her language. She was not so concerned about the English language as she had grown up speaking English and would not need to attend any English second language classes. She

expressed that for her a lot of things come down to the way that she *feels* about things, not always necessarily the rational choice. She recollects feeling very connected with the girls and as she started talking with them she felt more involved with them emotionally, which was a positive move for her. She said, “I felt like this person really wanted me there. I felt like they were encouraging me and I felt like I would have someone that was like my family.”

When asked what her prior knowledge was of Oklahoma or more specifically Tahlequah she stated she didn't know much, but that she did begin to Google the area and look at images of the community. She said specifically she used *Wikipedia*. She responded with a funny story about being in the supermarket when she was traveling through Germany and receiving a phone call from the coach. She said the conversation lasted one hour and that she began getting funny looks from people in the supermarket wondering why she was there having such a long phone call. She said at that point she didn't care because it was such an encouraging call and she was enjoying every minute. It was after this time that she called her parents and said, “I'm going to Tahlequah, Oklahoma next year.” She was certain that the decision to move to the United States was solely hers but that she did correspond openly with her parents about the decision. She finalized her motivations for coming to NSU with the fact that she would receive a full scholarship to attend the university.

All things considered, Gwen's motivations to attend Northeastern State University where the scholarship opportunities, the opportunity to play on a sports team, and the closeness that she felt with those who reached out to her who made her feel welcome to attend the school including coaches and students.

Sammy

Sammy was born Jordanian, but moved to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a small child and gained dual citizenship with Jordan and the UAE. His primary passport is from the UAE and that is the country he calls home. Coming from the UAE Sammy has always been afforded a very lavish lifestyle with many amenities and opportunities given to him. He attended a primary school and high school that were taught in English and based on the American common core system. A professor who moved to the UAE from Colorado and began the school there developed the curriculum using the Common Core. Sammy recalls his first memory of wanting to come to the United States. He was 14 years old and he was attending an American high school in his country and he remembers thinking “I want to end up in America.” Many of his friends and their parents had spoken very highly of the American education system and they believed that it was a much better place to gain higher education than their home country. Sammy’s first choice for college was not a university located in rural Oklahoma, in fact, his first choice was UCLA; in fact, he applied and was accepted to UCLA. However, his father was not highly keen on the idea of his young son moving to Los Angeles, California.

While Sammy was in the process of researching schools, a representative from Northeastern State University visited his high school in the UAE and spoke to them about NSU in Tahlequah. Sammy’s father was very impressed and he said his father felt calm after the representative’s presentation. He was pleased with her knowledge of Abu Dhabi culture and with her courtesy and professionalism. He was happy to have met someone who would be at the school his son potentially would be attending. His father told him that there would be people there to take care of him and people that he personally knew.

It was after the representative's visit that Sammy's father told him he was going to NSU to attend college.

Sammy was not pleased with this choice in the beginning. He showed animosity toward the decision, but according to his culture as he stated, "If dad says I'm going, I'm going. It was his choice and I followed his decision." He began to get excited about his upcoming travels to the United States and he would pull up NSU online and show his friends. He would say, "Look that's *my* university" with much excitement in showing them pictures of the campus. They were excited for him and many of them wanted to study abroad as well. He also spoke with some teachers at his school about his upcoming study abroad opportunity. His English teacher, who was originally from New Zealand, was thrilled that he was going to be studying in America. She knew personally how much he wanted to attend school there and was enthusiastic and encouraging about his opportunity.

When Sammy arrived to campus he carried a heavy chip on his shoulder for about a month, due to the fact that NSU was not his first choice to attend; however, after meeting the students, faculty and staff he began to lighten up a bit and began to partake in university activities. During the interview he emphatically stated he was very pleased with the decision his father had made and that he had made many friends here. He was happy to be in a small and safe community with access to the larger city of Tulsa and short driving distance to much larger cities such as Dallas including access to airports to visit friends in other states. Now many of his friends in the UAE want to move to Oklahoma and attend NSU as well. He utilizes Skype and other technology to show them

around campus from his dorm room. They have all been pleased with what they have seen.

In summation, Sammy's original desire to move to the United States was his own, however, the choice of school was that of his father's. He was very matter-of-fact in saying, "Family goes first and it was my family's choice" he continued, " I just decided I'll just go for it."

Chris

Chris is originally from West Bengal, India, and his story is one that is all too common of men and women living in the larger cities in India. He is 45 years old with a wife and children who still live in India. He worked for a company in India that assisted in the housing and rehabilitation of young children who had been kidnapped or left in bus stations by parents who could not afford to take care of them. He would assist the older, high school aged children and young adults in developing their workplace skills and teaching them how to learn a trade to sustain a living to support them once they had left the shelter.

Chris recalls his journey to the United States as if it were yesterday. He began by telling a story of his desire to move to the United States to be able to afford a better life for his wife and children. He said, he would have never dreamt that he would come to the United States, but when he got the opportunity to come as a tourist he liked the schools and he liked the way the courses were taught. He thought he would like to join one of the schools in the United States. As previously mentioned, he worked very long hours and very diligently to assist the children and young adults and his community in India. However, this job was barely paying the bills and his family was struggling to get by. He

informed me that while working in India he was making approximately \$30 per month, about a dollar day. He worked diligently and became a very good employee and finally made it to \$100 per month. Although he was hard-pressed with his job and the living conditions were less than desirable in many parts of India, he described his homeland as “the city of joy, a wellspring called Calcutta.”

Chris remembers first coming to Arkansas and staying for about three weeks in the state of Missouri. He traveled around and looked at several places and he took a great liking to one of the buildings in Arkansas. He recalls, “I said I want to go and see what this building is all about. They said it was a two year college and I said that makes it all the more better so I wanted to go check it out.” Interestingly enough it was the beauty of the architecture and the atmosphere of the outdoor surroundings that first made him fall in love with the area. When Chris returned home to India, he was faced with the startling discovery when he approached his boss about his desires to study in the United States. His boss told him there was no need for him to stay there anymore and that he should go back to the United States. At first Chris was elated and joyful but quickly discovered that the reason for his boss’ quick response was that Chris no longer had a job with the company. It was revealed that his boss was extremely displeased that he had visited the United States and indicated that he had stayed too long and that his job position had been filled by someone else. In his dismay of losing his job Chris quickly went home and spoke with his wife about the opportunity to study in United States. His wife was extremely supportive and agreed that it was the best option for the family. He was able to meet a woman in India, who was originally from the United States, who worked with him to fill out the formality of paperwork and sponsor him to come to the United States. In

India, to successfully obtain a visa, it is important that someone financially backs an individual who is interested in study abroad, as an investor or point of reference. Chris recounts that it was approximately one month later that he was on a plane traveling back to United States. He started his studies at Missouri Southern University where he met a woman by the name of Sonya who was working within the international programs office. She was very supportive and willing to help international students find on-campus work as well as help them attain housing and support services as needed.

Soon Sonya, who worked in the international programs office, would apply for a position at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, OK at the same time he was wrapping up his initial degree. Many of the international students at Missouri Southern had become very fond and very trusting of Sonya and they were very happy that she had decided to take the position offered to her as Director of International Programs at NSU; however, they were also saddened by the fact they would be losing a dear friend and a trustworthy individual who helped them adapt to life in the United States. As a result, many of the international students who were attending Missouri Southern applied for transfer to NSU. One of the students was Chris.

Chris recalls the time, attention and compassion that Cindy had for the international students who were so far away from their family and friends and familiar settings. He attests that this was the primary reason for the move to NSU. Secondly, he noted the size of the university and the community was very important to him. He enjoyed that the classes were small and the community was close. He was not pleased with the larger universities with class sizes of 300 to 400 students. He found it difficult to hear the speaker in his side of the classroom. He did not like that the classroom was

already full he had to sit far in the back and was unable to see the board. He noted that this is an important factor not only for international students but, in general for all students. He believes that smaller class sizes are more conducive to learning. Chris said he had an opportunity to go to the University of Oklahoma or he could've moved to Kansas City but he chose not to go there because in class sizes of 300 or more he could not learn anything in that situation. Taking these into account: the personal connection, small class sizes and small community with a feeling of safety and security were the reasons Chris ultimately came to NSU.

Billy

Billy is a Masters student at Northeastern State University and is from a medium-size city in the south of Brazil. He defines his state as small but very rich with a lot of industry and tourism that is near the beach and the sea. He has a positive feeling towards his city and explains that school there is very important and that everyone attends school, there are few if any dropouts and the crime is very low. Interestingly enough he feels that his experience is also different than the common international student who comes to study in the United States. His familiarity with the United States began when he was 15 years old. He explained that his father encouraged him to learn English throughout his life as a young child. He did not feel he was very good at learning the English language and always attained low-grades such as D's and F's in his English classes. However, when he was 15, his father sent him to North Carolina for one month to a very nice college to learn English. It was after this experience that he said his mind was changed about learning English and that he could see now that he needed to learn it to be successful in his future. So on his own he decided to attend the same program in North

Carolina the following year. As he continued to attend high school in Brazil he continued to study the English language, but after high school he said he ceased to take English classes due to the fact that he got married and began to work.

Through his job in law enforcement Billy began to travel to the United States for business and sometimes vacation. Each time he came to the United States he would realize that he needed to continue to study English to improve his language skills. He did attend school in Brazil and gain what is the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in the United States in law-enforcement. His desire was to come and study in the United States as a graduate student; however, with his growing family he knew the time was not right. He and his wife had three small children who were only a year apart in age. It wasn't until three years later and after long conversations with his wife they decided it was a good time to move to the United States. He began researching schools and his first choice was Texas. He said very matter-of-factly:

I like Texas, I like the way they run things there. I don't like big cities but I did my research and found three states with potential opportunity to work in law-enforcement: Oklahoma, California, and Vermont. My brother lived in Vermont for a year and it's freezing there! So I think moving to Vermont with three small kids... I come from hot weather... so Vermont it's not okay." California, I don't like the way they do things there. I don't like California lifestyle. So I think, okay Oklahoma is great I have a friend there and it's close to Texas.

Billy recalls first finding NSU online on the school website. He said he did a search for criminal justice and found that NSU has a collegiate officer program (COPS); however, after further research, he did not need to enroll in the program because this is a minor option and he already had attained a bachelor's degree. He agreed that it was the keyword search that put him in contact with NSU.

Billy emphatically claimed that he and his wife made this decision together and that he felt they both must be in agreement before making such a move. They are both very pleased with the decision that they have made and enjoy living in the community. When asked how his friends felt about his move, he stated that they were 100% behind him. In fact, he said they told him “Man that’s the best thing you could be doing for your family.” Since his move many of his friends have expressed to him that they want to do the same thing he’s done. Overall, he believes that this decision will help improve his life and improve the life of his family.

In summary of Billy’s interview, the culmination of his answers included: desire to move his family to a location where he was comfortable raising his children and believed in the overall views of the community, and the ability to attain a graduate degree specifically in criminal justice. He located information regarding NSU by searching the Internet for degrees containing the subject “criminal justice”.

Glenn

Glenn’s country of origin is Finland where he was born and raised and attended high school, as well as, some post-secondary education. He opted to attend a high school in Helsinki primarily because it was the best sport school in Finland. He had many connections there and many opportunities for him to succeed in the sport of soccer. He also knew that this high school offered English and his ultimate goal post high school was to study abroad. When asked if he considered any countries other than the United States he said “No absolutely only the USA.”

His number one reason for studying abroad in the United States was for life experience. The specific reasons why he chose NSU included tuition and location. He

agreed that he knew nothing about Tahlequah before he came to the area, but the one thing he did know was that in the big cities there were a lot of bad things that could happen to college students and plenty of trouble for them to get into. In a smaller town he believed that people would be nicer and everything would be close in proximity to the campus.

Billy had never traveled to the United States and didn't know much about the Midwest but he did his research into over 30 different colleges and universities; asking them about their sports programs, specifically soccer, and many of the schools were willing to offer him a scholarship because of his abilities. However, he soon found out that this would not be possible due to the fact that he had played professional soccer in Finland; therefore, this made him ineligible for any sport scholarships and ineligible to play for any collegiate sports team. At first he was a bit devastated because he had to start this process all over again. However, his mood quickly changed and his goal then was to find a school where he could be a part of the sport as a volunteer coach or trainer and study as well. If he could find this combination it would be doable and attainable to come to the United States.

During the process of his search he heard about NSU from one of his friends who was playing soccer at the University of Arkansas and also from another friend who was playing soccer in Atlanta. They began to speak to him about the differences in D1 and D2 schools and he felt at that time that D2 was a better option for him. He began to search the area around NSU and Tahlequah and liked the beauty that he saw on campus and in the surrounding areas such as the river and hiking trails.

Another factor for making the choices he did was that his girlfriend, who is also from Finland, had always had a dream to come to the United States. She is a tennis player and was also looking for a school in the U.S. in which she could get a scholarship through tennis. He confirmed that his reasons for coming to the United States and gaining a degree from a university here were more specifically to be able to travel, attain life experience and gain a degree. He had already been working in Finland for some time and he was ready to travel while he was still young. He also agrees the choice was his own but that he did speak with his family and girlfriend before he made the trip.

Billy ended by saying he would highly recommend this university to others in his country and that he had recommended it to his younger sister who is currently applying to universities in Finland. He loves the community and the beauty of the atmosphere that surrounds him. He has found an opportunity to be a volunteer assistant conditioning coach for the soccer team and simultaneously work on a degree in business, which he will be able to utilize when he returns to Helsinki. All in all, Billy enjoys the small community and atmosphere of the campus, but also enjoys the close proximity to the airport to be able to travel around the U.S. on the weekends.

Qualitative Study Findings

Participants contributed differing amounts of information to the six major themes that emerged from the narrative. Some participants talked at length on one or two themes; some participants made contributions to various listed themes across the board and others spoke to all themes combined.

The following six themes or issues emerge from the data:

1. What role did the family or a particular relationship with someone other than themselves play in the decision making process?
2. What made the participants decide on the particular university as a second choice?
3. What role did a desire to provide a better way of life for oneself or one's family play in the decision-making process?
4. At what age did the participant first consider studying in the U.S.?
5. How did affordability/cost effect the decision-making process of the student?
6. What role did safety, size, and comfort level play in the decision-making process?

Theme 1

What role did the family or a particular relationship with someone other than themselves play in the decision making process?

All six participants in one way or another mentioned the role of the family as a factor in making the decision to study abroad. Some mentioned a relationship with the father, others a more intimate relationship with someone of the opposite sex, however all in all it is clear that in each instance the family played a very important role in the decision-making process.

Theme 2

What made the participants decide on the particular university as a second choice?

While assessing the transcripts, it became a recurrent theme that the particular institution, Northeastern State University, was not the first choice of some of the international students. In one instance a student chose NSU because her scholarship fell

through due to NCAA complications. In another instance, the student originally wanted to move to Texas as he enjoyed the climate and lifestyle Texans live. In yet another example a student had originally been studying at Missouri Southern University and followed an administrator with whom he had made friends and become familiar with when her job moved her to NSU. One participant wanted to live on the West coast and attend UCLA because of the familiar name and the worldwide fame of California to younger generations. All in all, it was apparent the NSU was not the first choice, but became appealing once the student became familiar with the location and campus culture.

Theme 3

What role did a desire to provide a better way of life for oneself or one's family play in the decision-making process?

It is clear that four out of the six participants were determined to provide a better way of life for themselves or their family. In one instance a student was working very long hours and did not anticipate continuing at this rate for much longer. He was ready for a new life in a new country that would provide him with the education he needed to attain a better job. An older gentleman in the group of interviewees who was father to two young teenage girls wanted to make a better life for himself so that he could earn money to send back to his family in India. Yet another husband and father of three small boys desired to move his family with him to study in the U.S. and finally a young recent high school graduate who had moved out of war-torn Serbia as a small girl to the Czech Republic who had been afforded a much better life than the one she could have experienced in her home country desired to make her life even more rich and full by

utilizing her tennis ability to gain a scholarship to attend school in the U.S. All in all, the theme of providing a better life was present in the majority of the participants.

Theme 4

At what age did the participant first consider studying in the U.S.?

It is important to note that five out of the six participants stated that their first thoughts about studying in United States occurred around the age of 14 or 15. This is relevant and timely to recruiters within the higher education system to be able to begin outreach to students prior to high school graduation. It appears from this qualitative study that the majority of the students, five out of six, were considering studying in United States as early as ninth grade. If that's the case, recruitment needs to begin with students of this age including high school / university fairs; as well as, communication with high school counselors and offerings of study abroad programs while the students are still in the early years of high school.

Theme 5

How did affordability/cost effect the decision-making process of the student?

Affordability was a key factor that was discussed in all six of the interviews. Cost consideration were important whether the student was looking for scholarship, such as the two students looking for sport scholarships and sports opportunities or scholarship opportunities through their home country such was the case for Dave from Saudi Arabia who attained scholarship money from the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission which paid for all tuition, books, supplies, food, and even a housing allowance. Finally, in the instance of the other students who were unable to attain scholarships the price point of tuition, room, and board was high on the list in the decision-making process.

Theme 6

What role did safety, size, and comfort level play in the decision-making process?

Safety, size, and comfort level were all key points that all six of the participants discussed. The younger students brought up this key factor as one that was high on their parents' list of ideal places to study. Three out of the six mentioned that they felt their parents would go along with the idea of study abroad as long as they were choosing a safe and secure place such as a smaller community in the Midwest region of the United States. One of the six students, Sammy, was not concerned so much with safety and was more interested in a larger more well known prestigious school such as UCLA. However, he was included in the group of students who mentioned that his parents felt more secure and inclined to let him study abroad if he were in a small community where his parents knew at least one contact and had met them personally.

The two older participants in this qualitative study also mentioned the importance of safety, size, and comfort level. Billy in particular mentioned specifically liking not only the weather in the southern part of the United States, however he also mentioned that he likes the way of life in the way of thinking of the people who lived in this area. He mentioned the north, more specifically Vermont, was too cold in the wintertime for his liking and that he did not like the California lifestyle; therefore, the Midwest and southern portions of the United States with smaller communities appealed to him more.

Quantitative Phase Results

Once the major decision-making themes were established in the qualitative phase of this study, they were used to construct the survey used in the second quantitative phase to determine if the themes generalized to a large sample. This portion of the research

utilized probability sampling by implementing random sampling techniques to the RUSO international student population. The goal was to answer the study's three research questions that address quantitatively the sentiments of international students regarding the relative influences of factors that led them to decide to study and complete their degrees within a RUSO school. The quantitative results were also integrated with the qualitative findings to address the study's fourth research question regarding the success of the generalizability of the qualitative themes identified.

The study's surveys was developed and distributed via the online survey tool Qualtrics. The researcher recruited participants via email by sending the email initially to a designated school international student administrator on each campus who had access to an international student listserv. This administrator distributed the email to the international student community. Participants were given two weeks to complete the survey.

This phase used the results from the Qualtrics software program for data analysis. It included descriptive statistics that described the characteristics of the sample and also used rating and ranking statistical techniques to determine which decision-making factors were identified as top motivators by the international students to choose the RUSO schools. The results are presented in this section.

Research Question 1

What is the demographic profile of international students currently studying or who have studied in RUSO schools in the past 24 months?

The demographic data collected on the survey instrument was used to develop the participant profile to address this research question. The descriptive demographic data is presented in Table 8.

As shown in Table 8, the sample was $N=139$ and of the total participants 62 (44%) identified themselves as male and 77 (56%) as female. Thus, the sample was fairly evenly divided by gender.

The sample was $N=139$ and of the total participants 62 (44%) identified themselves as male and 77 (56%) as female.

Out of 139 responses, 124 (91%) stated they were between the ages of 18-25; 13 (9%) participants claimed to be between 26-35 and finally 0 participants stated that they were between 36-45. One participant did not respond to this question. When asked if the participant required English Language Training upon entry to the U.S. 30 (22%) participants responded Yes and 108 (78%) responded No. This indicates that the student successfully passed either the Test of English Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language testing System (iELTS) exam.

All 139 participants responded to the housing question, for which the results were approximately equally divided with 71 (51%) students living in the dorms or university housing and 68 (49%) living off campus in a house or apartment.

Table 8

Demographics of Sample (N=139).

Gender	N	%
Male	62	45%
Female	77	55%
Total	139	100%
University		
Northeastern State University	10	7%
University of Central Oklahoma	59	42%
East Central University	46	33%
Northwestern Oklahoma State University	15	11%
Southeastern Oklahoma State University	9	6%
Total	139	100%
Age of Participants		
18-25	125	91%
26-35	13	9%
36-45	0	0%
No Response	1	<1%
Total	138	100%
Degree Level		
Bachelor degree	115	83%
Masters or doctorate degree	16	12%
Diploma or certificate	3	2%
English language training	0	0%
Other	5	4%
Total	139	100%

Out of 139 responses, 132 (95%) students claimed full time student status while only 5 (4%) claimed part-time status and 2 participants chose unsure/don't know. Table 8

displays the degree level of each participant with the majority of students enrolled at the bachelor degree level, 16 at the Master's or Doctorate level, 3 as Diploma or Certificate, and 5 participants claimed Other. Thus, the international students were generally full time students and most were undergraduates.

Most participants, 87 respondents (63%) stated they began learning English at age 12 or earlier, 28 (20%) said English was their first language, only 16 participants (12%) said they began to learn English as a teenager and finally, 8 students (6%) said they began to learn the language as an adult at age 18 or older.

105 (76%) participants stated they had not visited the U.S. before deciding to study here and 34 (24%) said they had visited the U.S. prior to their decision. It thus appeared that the large majority of the international students were not personally familiar with the U.S. before choosing to study here, eliminating personal experience as a factor in making this choice. Other factors were clearly relevant in the decision process.

Two other demographics were included on the survey to identify the country of origin and citizenship of the participants. These were important variables in the profile of the participants, but regrettably, due to a survey malfunction none of the participants were able to answer the questions regarding country of origin and citizenship. This topic will be addressed further in Chapter V.

Research Question 2

How were the students informed about study abroad opportunities in the U.S. and Oklahoma?

When asked how the participants *first* heard about studying in the United States 135 participants responded. Table 9 displays the results for the question.

Table 9

Participant's Initial Communication about Studying in the U.S.

Information Communicated by:	<i>N</i>	%
Friends	78	58%
Family	71	53%
Website of the University	43	32%
School counselor or teacher in my home country	34	25%
Workshops or school fairs in my home country	26	19%
Agent	15	11%
Someone from my current university visited my home country	14	10%
United States government website	13	10%
Other Internet site, please specify	7	5%
Other source, please specify	7	5%
No Response	4	2.9%
Total	135	100%

Participants also indicated they first heard about studying in the U.S. through sites such as collegeboard.org, usnews.com, plexuss.com, petersons.com, Google, and Facebook. They also reported they obtained information from the United States Education Foundation (USEF), magazine publications, recruiters, in high school and that they had a personal interest from a young age.

The majority of students, 86 (65%) indicated they only considered studying in the US. Other students reported they considered places such as Australia, Canada, Germany, Singapore, New Zealand, Finland, France, Mexico, the United Arab Emirates, and the U.K.

When asked if Oklahoma was the *first* choice, 92 (70%) said Yes and 39 (30%) said no, they had considered another state first. When asked what other states were

considered, 35 (27%) participants said they only considered Oklahoma, 97 (74%) said they considered another state first and 50 (38%) considered more than one state other than Oklahoma to study.

Participants were asked how they heard about their *current* university. Table 10 shows the results.

Table 10

Participants' Initial Communication about Their Current University.

Source	N	%
Friends	58	43%
University website	48	36%
Agent	32	24%
Family	27	20%
School counselor or teacher in my home country	26	19%
Someone from my school (the University) visited my home country	19	14%
Other Internet site (please specify)	10	7%
Workshops or school recruitment fairs in my home country	12	9%
Other source (please specify)	6	4%
US government website	2	1%

Other sources listed were: collegboard.org, usnews.com, baseball coach, college fair at my American High School, recruiter, Education USA advising center, and seniors who are studying at the current university.

The data presented in Tables 9 and 10 indicate that international students use a variety of sources of information in determining to study in the U.S. and to select the specific university they attend.

Research Question 3

What factors influenced the international students' decision to attend a RUSO school?

Participants were asked to rate *how important a set of factors were in their decision to study in Oklahoma*. The researcher considered asking the participants to both rank and rate each item, but felt there were too many items (11) within the question to allow the participants to accurately and reliably rank the. She felt that rating would be a more consistent measure. Also, the mean rating of each item is based on how many individuals actually answered each item and would therefore control for any missing responses. The researcher chose to therefore utilize mean rating scores for the 11 items to define the rank ordering of the items after the fact.

Data relating to the 11 decision factors are presented in Table 11. The data includes a frequency distribution of the rating responses, mean rating scores, and ranking of each factor ordered by mean rating. After reviewing the data it was clear that most people answered most questions. Based on the mean rating scores for the 11 decision factors (on a 5-point scale), it was also clear that that all factors were at least somewhat influential and this research could not identify any of the influencers that were statistically *not at all important*. After reviewing the mean ratings of the 11 decision factors, the researcher evaluated and tiered the data according to mean ratings. Tiers were identified based on small variations within tiers and larger gaps between tiers. All mean scores above 4.0 were identified as a *very important* rating and were listed in Tier 1.

Table 11

How Important Were Influencers in Decision to Study in Oklahoma: Ranking, Mean Importance Rating, Frequency Distribution, and Tier Analysis

Rank	Influencer	Not at all Important	Very Unimportant	Neither	Very Important	Extremely Important	Total Responses	Mean
TIER 1								
1	Costs (tuition and living)	1	7	8	42	76	134	4.38
2	Safety and security	0	4	11	60	56	131	4.28
3	Quality of education	2	4	11	62	55	134	4.22
TIER 2								
4	Future employment goal	4	7	31	48	43	133	3.89
5	Friendly people	5	5	28	62	33	133	3.85
6	Reputation of institution	4	7	29	58	35	133	3.85
7	Multicultural environment	8	8	37	53	24	130	3.59
8	Opportunities for on-campus employment	12	14	24	52	30	132	3.56
9	Desire to live in Oklahoma	18	14	55	30	14	131	3.06
TIER 3								
10	Opportunity to play a university sport	26	21	38	28	18	131	2.93
11	I knew someone attending/working at the university	29	15	42	29	16	131	2.91

Participants were also asked *how much influence did each of the following have on your decision to attend your current university?* This data was analyzed exactly as the

data for the previous question. Results are shown in Table 12. After reviewing the data it is clear that most people answered most questions and that all factors were at least *somewhat influential*. After reviewing the mean ratings of the decision factors, the researcher evaluated and tiered the data according to mean ratings and then conducted a tier analysis. In this analysis, the researcher chose to divide the results into three distinct tiers and focus primarily on the highest mean ratings. Mean ratings above 3.0 were listed in Tier 1 and reported as the top 4 influencers, as shown in Table 12.

The top four influencers were:

1. University tuition was affordable / low cost (with a mean of 4.00 on a scale of 5)
2. Family (dad, mom, wife, husband) was an influence (with a mean of 3.35 on a scale of 5)
3. University website was appealing (with a mean of 3.16 on a scale of 5)
4. Direct communication from University (email, letter, fax etc.) (with a mean of 3.15 on a scale of 5)

Table 12

How Much Influence Did Each of the Following Have on Your Decision to attend Your Current University: Ranking, Mean Importance Rating, Frequency Distribution, and Tier Analysis

Rank	Question	No influence	Somewhat influential	Neutral	Highly influential	Extremely influential	Total Responses	Mean
TIER 1								
1	University tuition was affordable / low cost	8	6	18	46	54	132	4.00
2	Family (dad, mom, wife, husband, etc.)	17	12	37	43	25	134	3.35
3	University website	18	20	36	41	18	133	3.16
4	Direct communication from University (email, letter, fax, etc.)	21	20	32	38	22	133	3.15
TIER 2								
5	Friends or acquaintances	29	17	47	32	8	133	2.80
6	Talking with students/alumni from the University	34	16	45	27	8	130	2.68
7	School counselor or teacher in my home country	38	15	47	28	5	133	2.60
TIER 3								
8	Brochures/pamphlets about institution	40	20	47	23	2	132	2.45
9	Contact with a recruiter or Coach from the University	47	15	43	20	7	132	2.43
10	Opportunity to play on a university sport team	56	15	36	14	11	132	2.31
11	Advertisements or stories in magazines, newspapers or on TV or radio shows	51	19	44	18	1	133	2.24
12	Personal visit from an Oklahoma university representative to my home country	57	13	40	17	4	131	2.22

Research Question 4

Are the decision-making factors identified in a small number of qualitative interviews of international students generalizable to a larger sample of the population of RUSO international students and do common patterns and influences emerge?

This research question was addressed by comparing and integrating the results of the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. After close examination of the qualitative and quantitative data, there were six emergent themes or issues from the qualitative data:

1. What role did the family or a particular relationship with someone other than themselves play in the decision making process?
2. What made the participants decide on the particular university as a second choice?
3. What role did a desire to provide a better way of life for oneself or one's family play in the decision-making process?
4. At what age did the participant first consider studying in the U.S.?
5. How did affordability effect the decision-making process of the student?
6. What role did safety, size, and comfort level play in the decision-making process?

These themes can be further consolidated into a more concise list of:

- Family
- Second Choices
- Better way of life
- Age of consideration
- Affordability
- Safety, security and size

To further analyze this list, the researcher divided the emergent themes into those that the RUSO institution can control and those themes they cannot control. This division is shown in Table 13. By dividing these factors into groups the researcher was able to begin to analyze the quantitative data for patterns or common influencers that were present in both phases of the research.

Table 13

Factors that Are Controllable v. non-controllable by a RUSO Institution

Controllable	Non-controllable
Affordability	Age of Consideration
Safety on Campus	Size of campus
Better way of life	Second Choice

The quantitative data collected from the larger sample of the population as shown in Tables 11 and 12 identified that the top influencers in the decision making process were:

- Cost or affordability of the institution
- Family influence
- Safety and Security
- Quality of Education
- Appealing university website
- Direct communication from the university

Table 13 shows the identified factors side-by-side in both the qualitative and quantitative studies.

Table 14

Comparison of Emergent Themes in Qualitative and Quantitative Phases

Qualitative Study (N=6)	Quantitative Study (N=139)
Affordability	Cost or Affordability
Family	Family/Friends Influence
Safety, Security, Size	Safety and Security
Better Way of Life	Quality Education
Second Choice University	Appealing University Website
Age of Consideration	Direct Communication from the University

After review of this data in Table 13 it can be seen that the decision-making factors identified in a small number of qualitative interviews of international students have considerable generalizability to a larger sample of the population of RUSO international students. In particular, the top factors were similar in the qualitative and quantitative data. Patterns and influences that appeared in both the qualitative and quantitative data were the influence of family and friends on the decision making factors in both the small qualitative group ($N=6$), as well as, the larger sample in the quantitative group ($N=139$). Both groups indicated family played a key role in considering to study abroad in the U.S. and more precisely to choose Oklahoma as their final destination. Another influence that was a priority to both groups was the opportunity to provide a better way of life for the student and/or their family. Also common among groups was the cost and affordability factor. It was conveyed by the qualitative group, and generalizable

to the larger sample of the population that compared to universities across the U.S., Oklahoma tuition is both affordable and attractive to international students.

Students in both groups indicated that safety, security and size of institution were high on the list of importance when making a decision to study in the U.S. Participants in the qualitative group said they were attracted to the fact that Tahlequah and the surrounding community appeared safe and secure to both them and their family members. Students in the larger sample of the population agreed that they were concerned with safety, size and security and this was one of the top influencers that helped them make their decision to study in a RUSO school.

It is also noteworthy in assessing the success of generalizability of the qualitative themes to the larger quantitative sample that all decision factors listed on the survey were derived from the qualitative interviews. Significantly, all these items were rating of at least moderate importance by the survey sample, indicating that the interviews did not generate any factors considered to be unimportant by the larger sample.

Based on these integrative findings, it appears that the qualitative phase was successful in guiding and developing the quantitative instrument and therefore the exploratory sequential mixed methods design was a successful model for this study. What was not addressed in this study was whether a large sample would identify any decision factors not identified by the qualitative process. This would require open-ended responses from the quantitative sample and was beyond the scope of this study.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Study

This study explored the decision-making factors that international students take into consideration when choosing to study within the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO). Current research (Choudaha, Chang, & Kono, 2013; Open Doors, 2014; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002) is showing that international student mobility is accelerating due to significant growth in global trade and industry, increases in foreign-government-sponsored programs for educational purposes, international societal interconnectedness, declining national controls, and increased educational opportunities. This phenomenon is being observed in the RUSO schools, but virtually nothing is currently known about *why* international students choose to travel long distances to attend the relatively small regional universities that make up the RUSO system. Therefore, it was the aim of this study to conduct inductive and deductive research to identify decision-making variables that are present prior to international students choosing to come to the U.S. and to RUSO schools in particular, for their higher education. This effort may help increase and target recruitment efforts by RUSO schools and ultimately

create a larger international presence on campuses for global development in higher education in Oklahoma.

The specific purpose of this study was to examine and describe factors that contributed to a decision by international students to choose to study in the RUSO schools. This research purpose is relevant and timely, in that recruitment and retention are key factors for administrators and faculty working to build these programs within the RUSO system. Improved understanding of the reasons that international students identify for choosing to come to a RUSO school can be helpful in targeting recruitment and other school outreach information to appeal to the motivations of these students.

In Chapter IV findings were presented of the research conducted for this study and from those findings this chapter will draw conclusions, describe implications, and recommend future research that is timely and necessary for the continued recruitment and retention of international students on RUSO campuses and throughout Oklahoma.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of international students currently studying or who have studied in RUSO schools in the past 24 months?
2. How were the students informed about study abroad opportunities in the U.S. and Oklahoma?
3. What factors influenced the international students' decision to attend a RUSO school?
4. Are the decision-making factors identified in a small number of qualitative interviews of international students generalizable to a larger sample of the population of RUSO international students and do common patterns and influences emerge?

This research used an *exploratory sequential mixed-methods* research design. The first phase of the study was a qualitative exploration of factors that contributed to a decision by a small sample of international students (N=6) to choose to study English in the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO). For this phase of the study interview data was collected from international students studying at NSU on the Tahlequah campus. From this preliminary investigation, the qualitative discoveries were used to develop quantitative measures that were administered to a larger sample of the population.

In the quantitative phase of the study (N=139), participants were invited to complete an online questionnaire that included general demographic questions and items relating to decision-making factors that was created from data collected in the initial qualitative phase of the study, as well as, incorporation of pertinent data found in the literature review.

Chapter IV reported that this study yielded useful findings to RUSO institutions for recruitment and retention of international students. Summaries of these principle findings are discussed in the next section.

Summary of Principal Findings

Emergent Themes from the Qualitative Data

There were six emergent themes from the qualitative data that identified decision-making factors in choices made by international students to come to the U.S. and to a RUSO school:

1. What role did the family or a particular relationship with someone other than themselves play in the decision making process?
2. What made the participants decide on the particular university as a second choice?

3. What role did a desire to provide a better way of life for oneself or one's family play in the decision-making process?
4. At what age did the participant first consider studying in the U.S.?
5. How did affordability effect the decision-making process of the student?
6. What role did safety, size, and comfort level play in the decision-making process?

These themes were further consolidated into a more concise list of:

- Affordability
- Family
- Safety, security and size
- Second Choices
- Better way of life
- Age of consideration

Decision Factors from the Quantitative Data

The quantitative data collected from the larger sample of the population as shown in Tables 11 and 12 in Chapter IV revealed through rating, ranking, and tier analysis techniques, that the top influencers in the decision making process were:

- Cost or affordability of the institution
- Family influence
- Safety and Security
- Quality of Education
- Appealing university website
- Direct communication from the university

Comparison of the Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Comparison of both the qualitative and quantitative influencers side by side is presented in Table 13 in Chapter IV. This comparison allowed the researcher to view the emergent themes from both phases of the study side-by-side and conclude that the decision-making factors identified in a small number of qualitative interviews of international students were generalizable to a larger sample of the population of RUSO international students. The researcher further determined that there were emergent patterns and common influencers that were repeated throughout the study, such as:

- Affordability/cost
- Family and friends influence
- Safety and security
- Quality Education
- Opportunity for a better way of life

Conclusions

From the data in this study, five major conclusions can be drawn.

Conclusion 1. *There are specific and clearly identifiable reasons why international students choose to travel to the U.S. and study at RUSO schools.*

This study provided data that supported the researcher's working hypothesis that the international students are influenced by social factors and family-related influences that relate to Social Constructionism in decision-making. Specifically, as shown in Table 14 in Chapter IV, the clearly identifiable reasons in both the small qualitative group ($N=6$), as well as, the larger sample in the quantitative group ($N=139$) as to why international students chose to travel to the U.S. and study in RUSO schools were the influence of family and friends, the safety and security of the campus and community, the

cost and affordability factor, the opportunity to provide a better way of life for the student and/or their family and quality education.

Conclusion 2. *International students in the RUSO schools have variety in their demographic characteristics.*

As reported in Chapter IV, in the small qualitative sample the students' country of origin varied among the students. They represented collectivist and individualist cultures, including, India, Finland, Saudi Arabia, The United Arab Emirates, Serbia, and Brazil. In the larger sample of the population, 62 students identified themselves as male, 77 as female, which appears to be nearly evenly split. The majority of students in the study who completed the survey were from University of Central Oklahoma (59) followed by East Central (46), Northwestern Oklahoma State (15), Northeastern State University (10), and finally Southeastern Oklahoma State University (9). Conclusions from this data are two-fold:

- 1) The students from the University of Central Oklahoma and East Central University are either more connected to their international programs office than other RUSO campus international students and therefore more likely to respond to email communication or they have a close campus culture that allows them to communicate about circulating correspondence and opportunities for international student program development on campus.
- 2) These numbers could be reflective or representative of the international population percentage on each campus.

125 students indicated they were between the ages of 18-25. 13 participants said they were between 26-35 and only one student did not respond. 115 students said they

were studying at a Bachelor's degree level, 16 at a Master's level, only 3 at a certificate level and 5 noted Other as their choice.

Conclusion 3: *This study supported the theory base of this study and extended the knowledge base of the theories applied.*

This study supports theoretical foundations of mixed methods research as reported by Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2011), Creswell and Clark (2011) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003). These theorists supported numerous successful models of mixed methods research that have produced useful data for future development in the field of educational research. Mixed-methods models have provided several approaches to successfully combining qualitative and quantitative elements with beneficial effects of allowing rich explorations of phenomena. This study demonstrated the appropriateness and successful outcome of this mixed-methods theoretical position.

The study also supports several other aspects of the theories that framed it. For example, it supports Glasser's Choice Theory, which proposes that each individual is responsible for ultimately making final decisions in life. Although the participants in this study were pushed and pulled by certain factors, they ultimately made the final decision. Glasser points out that there are essentially five basic needs in life:

- **Survival** (food clothing, shelter, breathing, personal safety and others)
- **Love** (belonging and connecting)
- **Power** (significance and competence)
- **Freedom** (autonomy)
- **Fun** (learning and enjoyment of life)

The data presented in Table 14 shows some of the top influencers identified by the participants in this study. Table 15 shows these factors side-by-side with Glasser's Choice Theory.

Table 15

Glasser's Choice Theory verses Decision-making Factors / Influencers in this Study

Glasser's Model	Decision-making factors/influencers
Survival (food clothing, shelter, breathing, personal safety and others)	Safety and security
Love (belonging and connecting)	Love for and approval from family and friends
Power (significance and competence)	Quality Education
Freedom (autonomy)	
Fun (learning and enjoyment of life)	Opportunity for a better way of life

The researcher also discovered that existing literature accounted for push/pull factors (Mazzarol & Soutar 2002) and is now used within international student mobility (ISM) research by applying human capital as the main driver for positive return on investment (ROI). The researcher does conclude that the more recent Push / Pull Theory which asserts that factors occur both within the country of origin (push factors) and the host country (pull factors), and that both motivate the students' decision to study abroad, is more relevant than the original Theory of Migration proposed by Ravenstein in 1885. The pull factors that are present in the host country make the particular country attractive to the international student. Both push and pull factors are posited to act jointly upon migration decisions.

The Mazzarol and Soutar study (2002) recognized six main identifiable push/pull factors that led international students to make a decision to study abroad. These factors included: (a) the importance of knowledge and the awareness of host country, (b) the importance and recommendations of friends and relatives, (c) cost issues, (d) environment, (e) social links and (f) geographic proximity. All six of the identifiable factors mentioned in Mazzarol and Soutar's work were recognized in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study by international students who chose RUSO as their destination of choice. These findings lend clear support to the Push/Pull theory in this context.

Conclusion 4: *This study supports the exploratory sequential mixed methods research design as an effective methodology for using qualitative technique to inform and create a generalizable quantitative instrument.*

According to Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, and Collins (2009), mixed methods studies have become increasingly popular among researchers in the last 25 years. Furthermore, according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), "The primary purpose of the exploratory sequential design is to generalize qualitative findings based on a few individuals in the first phase to a larger sample gathered during the second phase" (p. 86). Essentially, it can be contended that simply interviewing a small number of students from one institution would not have yielded adequate data to answer the larger question of whether or not the sentiments are comparable across the state institutions in the RUSO system. Decision-making factors for NSU students may or may not reflect those of all RUSO students. Thus, a single-phase qualitative study would not have met the goals of this study. Similarly, a single-phase quantitative study might have been faulty due to lack of

preliminary knowledge to guide the development of an appropriate instrument. The interlocking goals of this study were to first determine a list of factors that led international students to choose this region of the United States to study (i.e. theory forming) and then to substantiate whether or not this information is transferable to a larger sample of Oklahoma RUSO students statewide, (i.e. theory testing). These goals were both met by using mixed-methods in an exploratory sequential design in a QUAL-QUAN technique (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This study was a successful demonstration of the suggestion by Kemper, Stringfield and Teddlie (2003) that a first qualitative phase is often required to create or enhance an instrument to distribute to the larger sample in a quantitative portion of the study.

The findings of this study show that the decision factors identified in the qualitative phase and used in the survey instrument are also rated as important by the larger quantitative sample. This research study demonstrates that this type of exploratory sequential mixed methods design can be successful in producing the results it proposed to do, that is to develop a valid instrument to determine if the result of a small group are generalizable to a sample of the larger population. To further strengthen this conclusion and the fusion of the qualitative/quantitative data sets, it may be beneficial to include open-ended items on the survey to determine if the larger sample identifies any additional decision factors missed by the qualitative interviews.

Conclusion 5: *There is an opportunity to continue this line of inquiry and build a research agenda.*

It was concluded by this researcher that this study creates the opportunity to continue this line of inquiry regarding the relationship between various cultures and the

role that the emergent themes played on each particular cultural group's decision to study at a RUSO institution. Due to survey malfunction, the researcher was unable to attain the data needed to determine country of origin and therefore, further study the importance that family had on students who came from collectivist cultures versus those who came from individualist cultures. A new line of inquiry and focused research agenda can be opened that would entail collecting cultural data on RUSO students and using both quantitative data, perhaps crosstab and chi-square analysis, and qualitative interviewing to examination relationships between cultural characteristics and factors that influence choice of RUSO schools. Other demographic variables may also be important in this extended line of inquiry. While conducting post-study research, the researcher discovered that Lu, Zong and Schissel (2009) conducted a study inquiring about the migration intentions of Chinese students to Canada. One aspect they considered was gender and family factors and how they influenced Chinese students to migrate to Canada to pursue higher education. This is a seminal study to help guide future research for RUSO schools in Oklahoma.

It was beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the evidence of relationships between sub-groups and what their decision-making factors may have been such as, European *versus* Asian migrants. However, it appears that this line of inquiry can continue to develop the research agenda of this researcher and improve recruitment and retention among RUSO campuses throughout Oklahoma.

Implications

Implication for Theory

This study adds to a growing body of knowledge of International Student Mobility and Migration and adds a new context in which Push / Pull Theory and Choice Theory successfully apply. Push / Pull Theory provided a succinct account of factors that push individuals out of their home country and pulled them to their destination of choice: (a) the importance of knowledge and the awareness of host country, (b) the importance and recommendations of friends and relatives, (c) cost issues, (d) environment, (e) social links and (f) geographic proximity. This research study concurs with Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and adds to that body of knowledge to include safety and security and quality education.

Glasser's Choice Theory does a thorough job of defining cognitive decision making in individuals, as this line of research shows, there are outside factors that both push and pull the individual and influence the students to ultimately make their final decision. The study supports a theoretical stance that students *do make the ultimate decision* but *are influenced* by outside factors such as those mentioned above.

Implication for Knowledge

It was discovered after review of the qualitative data that many of the students began to consider studying in the U.S. as early as 14 or 15 years of age. It was further discovered after reviewing the qualitative transcripts that students did not choose their particular institutions as their first choice. Students in the qualitative study stated they had opportunities at universities outside the state of Oklahoma prior to choosing Oklahoma or RUSO as their final destination of choice. Students in the quantitative study noted that

they chose Oklahoma as their first choice, but may have considered others before making their final decision. Having this knowledge is valuable to recruiters and administrators to clarify and make known the most frequent and highest influencers that students chose in this study as influencers that made them choose to study at their RUSO institution.

Implication for Practice

It is important to note that this research should be utilized for future practice and policy within the realm of higher education on the RUSO campuses. Areas that may currently be overlooked are outreach to younger high school children and their families, as well as, the reflection of security and safety of campus and community in marketing materials. The following sections explain these implications.

Recommendations

Practice

Recommendation 1: Promote outreach to families and younger high school children.

It was discovered through qualitative and quantitative data analysis that family plays a statistically significant role in the decision making process. Therefore, it is of great interest that institutions should look into including the family of potential college students in marketing and information sharing programs. Recruiters from RUSO schools should consider creating events, whether virtual or in the home country of the potential international student, that would invite not only the students but the families and continue to hire and train empathetic relationship professionals who can show internationalism and reassuring behavior that their institution is indeed a safe and secure location with many opportunities for student involvement and mentorship.

Recommendation 2: Reflect safety and security in marketing materials.

Currently marketing materials reflect the most beautiful parts of campus and fun friendly activities. However, one recommendation for practice is developing marketing materials that not only reflect the beauty, but explain in detail the security measures that the campus has to protect their students, including brightly lit campuses at night, campus police presence throughout the campus at all times, and safe and secure dormitories with locked entry and security. Many of these features may be noted by campus staff and faculty, but may not be conveyed to the incoming students and their families. As it was noted as one of the top influences, it should have top priority on websites and marketing materials.

Recommendation 3: Personal communication and marketing within home countries.

Continuous contact / relationship building

One recommendation for practice is continued contact and relationship building with the student or agent in the designated country. The more continuous contact an institution has with a student and family the more trust and relationship will be built between them; therefore, ensuring open lines of communication are available in a timely manner is key in solidifying a decision to ultimately choose a RUSO school. Many cultural groups, primarily Asian and Middle Eastern, base their decisions and personal interactions on relationships. By building strong foundations and relationships with these countries, their agents and partnering with universities abroad, it will increase the internationalism throughout campus culture and boost opportunities to recruit students from these areas.

Repeated attempts to recruit

Furthermore, in both the qualitative and quantitative study, data emerged that showed students did not choose their current university as their first choice of study. Since this was identified as a recurring factor, it is important for recruiters, designated school officials (DSO) and administrators alike to continue to lobby and engage with continued communication even if a student has identified they have initially chosen another institution. Many opportunities are available for DSOs to be advocates for the institution. It is important for the DSO to be as helpful and kind as possible when students are inquiring about a transfer or indicate the institution was not their first choice. This does not necessarily mean the student didn't want to attend that university, it may simply imply another opportunity was available at the time.

Recommendation 4: Each RUSO School should study what is known about relationships of international students' demographic and cultural characteristics and the effects of these on decisions to select U.S. schools.

By researching the relationships of international students' demographic and cultural characteristics and the effects of these on decisions to select U.S. schools, RUSO recruiters and administrators can begin to understand the characteristics of both collectivist cultures, which emphasize family and work group goals above individual needs or desires and individualistic cultures, which are characterized by individualism and self-reliant decision making, and through this increase in knowledge can begin to build a knowledge management system to train and develop staff and recruiters to

increase international student numbers on campus. Once the knowledge is acquired it is important to implement it into campus and office culture.

Recommendation 5: Create a RUSO knowledge management system clearinghouse and database of articles, research reports, data, and other materials related to ISM.

According to Nonaka and Konno (1998), knowledge management (KM) has become a recurrently examined theme in the management literature. Nonaka and Konno re-introduce the proposed theory of Nishida's concept of "*ba*" as a common space to collect shared knowledge. They state, "*Ba* provides a platform for advancing individual and/or collective knowledge...knowledge is embedded in *ba* (in these shared spaces), where it is then acquired through one's experience or reflections on the experiences of others" (p. 1). The RUSO school system should work together to establish a KM system such as a clearinghouse and database of articles, research reports, data, and other materials related to international students and use this information to target recruiting and retention international students. This collective effort could strengthen and develop the international programs of the entire RUSO system.

Future Research

Recommendation 1: Examine evidence of relationships that arise among some of the variables.

Because some of the data that was collected was categorical, it is recommended that future studies be conducted to examine evidence of relationships that arise among some of the variables. For example, after the study was completed, the researcher was

curious as to what evidence might arise and employed the chi square (χ^2) test to determine whether there was statistically significance difference in the ratings of family influence between males or females to make the decision to study at their current university. The χ^2 test did show evidence of a relationship and therefore the researcher recommends future studies should be conducted to determine the degree of these relationships and their statistical significance. The researcher also suggests performing the χ^2 test and other appropriate statistical tests to determine the relationship that safety and security, friendly people on campus, and opportunities for on-campus employment played in the decision-making process for males versus females. This analysis should be extended to examine other demographic variables in addition to gender. The goal of this program of research would be development of extensive detailed information about relationships among demographic variables and decision factors that could inform and guide targeting of recruiting and retention of international students at RUSO schools.

Recommendation 2: Research on effects of cultural factors, social class, and access to higher education in determining variations in influences on choices of schools.

It is recommended to discover and database the national origins and ethnicity of international students in the RUSO system and the cultural preferences and needs of various ethnic groups and how these cultural patterns relate to decision factors to attend U.S. and RUSO schools. Findlay (2010), Holdsworth (2006) and Christie (2007) have addressed the issues of social class and student migration. They have conducted seminal studies that have recognized children from working class backgrounds in the UK have disadvantages to their access to higher education both at home and internationally. It is

recommended that this research and the line of inquiry regarding decision making factors in RUSO schools be combined to search deeper into the cultural factors, social class and ultimate choice options that international students have in their final study abroad destination.

The opportunity to continue the line of inquiry stated earlier concerning collectivist and individualist cultures would be beneficial knowledge to attain for international programs offices and administrators. By growing this research base it will inform these administrators of significant reasons that influence the decision making factors of each individual culture group and therefore guide the hiring and training process of recruiters and staff. It will be important to make this data available to the RUSO system to apply in developing effective recruiting materials for international students.

Recommendation 3: Test re-test of instrument.

It was further determined that the exploratory sequential mixed methods design utilizing both qualitative research and quantitative research successfully produced an instrument that is recommended to be utilized for future research in reliability. The test-retest reliability method is recommended to determine the reliability or stability of the instrument over time.

It is recommended that this survey be distributed to various college settings to international students not only in Oklahoma, but in surrounding Midwestern states to determine if the results of the RUSO students are generalizable to the larger population of international students across colleges in the Midwest.

Recommendation 4: Safe environments for internationals: student services

This study opens a line of research to explore the feeling of safety and security by international students on college campuses. Researchers (Dalton, 1999; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Massey 2009; Peterson, Briggs, Dreasher, Horner, & Nelson, 2002; Zimmerman, 1995;) have explored international students, campus diversity and student affairs practices. It is recommended by this researcher that the consideration is made to combine these lines of research for future study to contribute to campus culture and practices. It is recommended that cross-campus communities and offices begin to ensure a safe, and welcoming environment across campus culture for international students.

By conducting these future studies, using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, on campus, administrators, deans and directors can begin to understand the sentiments of the international students already studying on their campuses and determine where gaps in communication and practice can begin to be filled which will make the campus environment even more appealing to future students.

Recommendation 5: The use of knowledge management system and the theory of *ba* to retain the developed knowledge concerning decision-making factors and other significant data within international programs offices.

As stated in Recommendation 5 for Practice, Nonaka and Konno (1998) state, knowledge management (KM) has become a recurrently examined theme in the management literature. It is recommended that this research be combined with ISM research and utilized to examine how knowledge is retained and disseminated within

international programs offices. Depending on campus culture, retirement and resignation factors, turnover rate can become high among various offices across college campuses. This research would open a line of inquiry to what happens to the knowledge and contact relationships of key administrators and staff if they leave offices of international programs.

Final Thoughts

This study began as a conversation between colleagues with the simple question, *why do international students choose Oklahoma?* From a simple conversation and a question such as this a full research agenda is born. Many lessons were learned along this journey, perseverance was crucial in achieving the task of completion. Lessons learned along the way will be noted and used as learning models for my future students wishing to pursue the same path of thesis or dissertation. As mentioned earlier in this study, a malfunction in the survey, caused questions to be unanswerable; however as any researcher knows, conducting research in the field is never clean and easy, it is messy and we are human, therefore errors can occur and these are lessons learned.

As stated in the beginning of this study, internationalism, globalization and student mobility are on the rise and the shores of the world are drawing closer in the realm of higher education. These changes are driven by technology, advancements in media formats and capabilities, and available opportunities for international student admissions into universities in the United States (Enders & Fulton, 2002; McLuhan, 2008; Teichler, 2009). This phenomenon is not unique to, or driven exclusively by, higher education; in fact, 21st century research is showing that international student mobility is accelerating due to significant growth in global trade and industry, increases

in foreign-government-sponsored programs for educational purposes, international societal interconnectedness, declining national controls, and increased educational opportunities (Open Doors, 2014; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2012; World Education Services, 2013).

It can now be added to this line of research that international students who are coming to Oklahoma, and more specifically the RUSO system, are choosing these schools for specific reasons that include: influence from family and friends, quality education, the safety and security of the schools and communities, the affordability and low cost of tuition and cost-of-living in the surrounding communities. It has been discovered through this research that students heard about the RUSO system through friends and family, the internet, university website, personal interaction from a school representative, school counselors in their home country, workshop and school fairs in their home country, and agents. This researcher, school administrators and recruiters on the campus of Northeastern State University speculated that these topics were effective means for the recruitment of international students. The data collected throughout this research study solidifies these tactics are important and should continue to be used as effective means of recruitment.

By utilizing the data collected in this study such as key influencers in the final decision making factors of international students and implementation of highlighting these factors as attractive campus features in marketing materials and through recruitment tactics, administrators and recruiters across the RUSO system can begin to build the international population on college campuses in Oklahoma even more. As noted earlier in the study, the presence of international students on campuses throughout Oklahoma

reflect positively on the economic status of the state. Therefore, increased recruitment means positive economic growth for the cities and the smaller rural communities where most RUSO schools are located.

John F. Kennedy (1958) once said “we are a nation of immigrants”, although there continues to be a clash of opinions across this country regarding internationals crossing our borders, studying in our schools, and striving to attain citizenship, it is important to remember the single statement: we are a nation of immigrants. Since 9/11 the climate of this country has changed, it has transformed into, at times, the most tense of discussions and the most suspicious of newcomers to our shores. It is only through education and the building of knowledge that this country will continue to be a prosperous nation of immigrants. It will continue to grow, thrive, and be a global leader in innovation and industry. Brilliant minds, both citizens and internationals, across college campuses throughout the state of Oklahoma and the entire U.S. will build the economy and industry together. This will include the internationalism and empathetic global relations that will be fostered throughout campus communities by building international student populations throughout the institutions in Oklahoma.

Daisaku Ikeda (2016) states: “The differences between people need not act as barriers that wound, harm and drive us apart. Rather, these very differences among cultures and civilizations should be valued as manifestations of the richness of our shared creativity” (p. 1). Through the realization of the outcomes of this research it is clear that internationals still strive to reach the shores of America. Education and a better way of life are still key influencers in their decision to come to the U.S. By implementing the knowledge acquired through this research study, RUSO schools can continue to build

positive international relations and foster optimistic global campus culture that will contribute to the wealth of knowledge and empathetic global citizens that internationalism on college campuses can promote.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A IRB APPROVAL OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, December 22, 2014
IRB Application No ED14185
Proposal Title: Decision Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma: An Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 12/21/2017

Principal Investigator(s):
Marla Stubblefield Lynna Ausburn
6213 S 1st PI 257 Willard
Broken Arrow, OK 74011 Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B
IRB MODIFICATION APPROVAL OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERISTY

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Thursday, January 28, 2016 Protocol Expires: 12/21/2017
IRB Application No: ED14185
Proposal Title: International Student Mobility in Higher Education: Examining Decision Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt
Modification
Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) **Approved**
Principal Investigator(s):
Marla Stubblefield Lynna Ausburn
6213 S 1st PI 257 Willard
Broken Arrow, OK 74011 Stillwater, OK 74078

The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB.

- The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

Modification to add survey to study and to change title from "Decision Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma: An Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design" to "International Student Mobility in Higher Education: Examining Decision Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma"

Signature :



Hugh Crethar, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Thursday, January 28, 2016
Date

APPENDIX C
IRB APPROVAL NORTHEASTERN STATE UNIVERISTY



NORTHEASTERN
STATE UNIVERSITY

October 9, 2014

Human Subjects Review

Proposal Title: DECISION MAKING FACTORS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CHOOSING TO STUDY IN THE REGIONAL UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF OKLAHOMA: AN EXPLORATORY SEQUENTIAL MIXED METHODS

IRB #: 15-016

Dear Ms. Stubblefield and Dr. Ausburn:

Your research proposal has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Northeastern State University, contingent upon approval by Oklahoma State University's Institutional Review Board. It is the IRB's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the welfare of the participants in this study. Please submit a copy of the approval letter from OSU's IRB when you receive it.

You are authorized to begin your research and implement this study as of the start date listed in your application, or the date of this communication if you listed the start date as "As soon as possible," "Upon IRB Approval," or a similar phrase. This authorization is valid until the end date listed in your application, or for one year after approval of your study, whichever is earlier. After this authorization runs out, you are required to submit a continuation or renewal request for board approval. For student research as part of a course, approval ends when the course ends unless the instructor/faculty sponsor notifies IRB in writing that supervision will continue, or if another faculty sponsor notifies IRB of assuming supervision responsibilities.

This approval is granted with the understanding that the research will be conducted within the published guidelines of the NSU Institutional Review Board and as described in your application. Any changes or modifications to the approved protocols should be submitted to the IRB for approval if they could substantially affect the safety, rights, and welfare of the participants in your study. Please use the IRB number in all your communications.

Thank you for sending us your application for research involving human subjects. In doing so, you safeguard the welfare of participants in your study and federal funding of our university.

Sincerely,

Sophia Sweeney, PhD
Chair, Institutional Review Board
irb@nsuok.edu
P 918-444-3719
F 918-458-2351

Institutional Review Board

601 North Grand Avenue | Tahlequah, OK 74464-2399 | P 918.456.5511, ext. 2220 | F 918.444.2295

www.nsuok.edu

Quant approval sent 2-10-16

APPENDIX D

IRB MODIFICATION APPROVAL NORTHEASTERN STATE UNIVERISTY

Human Subjects Review

Proposal Title: DECISION MAKING FACTORS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CHOOSING TO STUDY IN THE REGIONAL UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF OKLAHOMA: AN EXPLORATORY SEQUENTIAL MIXED METHODS

IRB #: 15-016

Dear Ms. Stubblefield:

Your request to modify the protocol for IRB #15-016, originally approved on October 9, 2014, has been approved. This approval is retroactive to February 10, 2016. The modifications are noted on the first page of the approved version of the protocol (15-016R, attached), and have already been approved by the IRB at Oklahoma State University.

Thank you for submitting the request for modifications to the Institutional Review Board. By doing so, you safeguard the welfare of participants in your study and federal funding of our university.

Sincerely,

Sophia Sweeney, PhD
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Northeastern State University

Bagley Hall 222
Tahlequah, OK 74464

irb@nsuok.edu

P 918-444-3719

F 918-458-2351

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APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA



November 19, 2014

Human Subjects Review Approval

Proposal Title: Decision Making Factors For International Students Choosing To Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma: An Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods

Dear Ms. Stubblefield and Dr. Ausburn:

The UCO Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application and accepts the decision made by Oklahoma State University's Institutional Review Board.

This approval is granted with the understanding that the research will be conducted within the published guidelines of the UCO Institutional Review Board and as described in your application.

If there are any modifications, adverse events or allegations of non-compliance, please contact the UCO IRB.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us. We wish you all the best with your research.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. D. Mather', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Robert D. Mather, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
NUC 341, Campus Box 132
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, OK 73034
405-974-5479
irb@uco.edu

CC: Ms. Marla Stubblefield
Dr. Lynna Ausburn

APPENDIX F

IRB MODIFICATION APPROVAL UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

February 22, 2016

IRB Application #: 14172

Proposal Title: International Student Mobility in Higher Education: Examining Decision Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma

Type of Review: Amendment-Expedited

Investigator(s):

Ms. Maria Stubblefield
Dr. Lynna Ausburn
School of Teaching and Curriculum
College of Education
Oklahoma State University
257 Willard Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

Dear Ms. Stubblefield and Dr. Ausburn:

Re: IRB Amendment Application

We have received and reviewed your request for an amendment to your approved IRB application and supporting materials. The UCO IRB approves the following amendments to your application:

Changes to add survey to study and change title of study.

Original Approval Date: 11/19/2014

Approval Expiration: 11/11/2016

This project is approved for a one year period from the original approval date and any further modification to the procedures and/or consent form must be approved prior to its incorporation into the study. A written request is needed to initiate the amendment process. You will be notified in writing prior to the expiration of this approval to determine if a continuing review is needed.

We wish you continued success with your project. If our office can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Mather, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
NUC 341, Campus Box 132
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, OK 73034
405-974-5479
irb@uco.edu

APPENDIX G

IRB APPROVAL SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
1405 N. FOURTH AVE., PMB 4201
DURANT, OK 74701-0609

580-745-2672
FAX 580-745-7515
WWW.SE.EDU

November 7, 2014

Ms. Marla Stubblefield
6213 South 1st Place
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma 74012

Dear Ms. Stubblefield,

Thank you for submitting your research application, "Decision-Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma: An Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design," to the Human Subjects Research Review Committee. As chair of the committee, I have reviewed the application.

I write to inform you that your research is exempt from further review by the committee, according to both the first and second qualifications for exemption in the committee's bylaws. You can find a copy of the committee bylaws on the University's website, listed under "Faculty."

You are free to begin your research project according to the protocol outlined in your application. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records. Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brooks Flippen'.

Brooks Flippen, Ph.D.
Professor of History
Chair, HSRR

Quant approval sent 2-10-16

SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

APPENDIX H

IRB MODIFICATION APPROVAL SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
1405 N. FOURTH AVE., PMB 4201
DURANT, OK 74701-0609

580-745-2672
FAX 580-745-7515
WWW.SE.EDU

February 10, 2016

Ms. Marla Stubblefield
6213 South 1st Place
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma 74012

Dear Ms. Stubblefield,

Thank you for submitting to the Human Subjects Research Review Committee the proposed modifications to your research application, "Decision-Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma: An Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design." This application was exempted from further review on November 7, 2014 according to the first two exemptions in the committee's bylaws. You can find a copy of these bylaws from the university's webpage. As nothing in the proposed revisions negates these qualifications, I am free to exempt your present modifications from further review.

You are free to begin your research project according to the protocol outlined. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records. Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brooks Flippen".

Brooks Flippen, Ph.D.
Professor of History
Chair, HSRRC

SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

APPENDIX I

IRB APPROVAL EAST CENTRAL UNIVERSITY



1100 E. 14th Street, PMB C-8 – Ada, OK 74820-6999
(580) 559-5204 – (580) 559-5788 FAX

Duane C. Anderson
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

IRB Title: Decision Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma: An Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods
ECU IRB #: FY15-38

Dear Ms. Stubblefield and Dr. Ausburn:

This research proposal has been approved by East Central University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), contingent upon approval by Oklahoma State University's Institutional Review Board and receipt of a signed application. Once you have received approval from Oklahoma State University's IRB, please forward a copy of the approval along with a signed application to Dr. Marc Klippenstine, Chair of IRB, East Central University, 1100 E. 14th, Ada, Oklahoma 74820. Please use East Central University's IRB number, found above, in all your correspondence with ECU.

Once official approval has been provided, you are authorized to begin your research and implement this study using the start date listed in your application. This authorization is valid for one year after approval of your study. If this authorization expires, you are required to submit a continuation or renewal request for board approval.

Finally, this approval is granted with the understanding that the research will be conducted as described in your application. Any changes or modifications to the approved protocols should be submitted to East Central University's IRB for approval if they could substantially affect the safety, rights and welfare of your study's participants.

If further assistance with the approval or implementation of the study is needed, please contact Dr. Marc Klippenstine at mklippen@ecok.edu or 580-559-5342.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duane C. Anderson".

Duane C. Anderson
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

DCA:has

Oklahoma's Premier Student-Centered Regional University

Quant approval sent 2-10-2016

APPENDIX J

IRB APPROVAL NORTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY



Northwestern

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 580-327-8110
Fax: 580-327-8184
Email: cwcook@nwsu.edu

709 Oklahoma Boulevard
311 Vinson Hall
Alva, OK 73717

To: Ms. Marla Stubblefield
From: Curtis W. Cook
Date: November 17, 2014
Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project titled **“Decision Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma: An Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design”** it appears that your research involves activities that do not require full review by the Institutional Review Board according to federal guidelines.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full review. Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research is exempt from IRB approval. **You may proceed with the proposed research.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Curtis W. Cook'.

Compliance Officer
Institutional Review Board

Quant approval sent 2-10-2016

APPENDIX K

INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT
Subject: Please Read

Decision Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Research Study

The purpose of this study is to examine factors that contribute to a decision by international students to choose to study English in the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO). The questions for the study are 1. What is the demographic profile of international students currently studying or who have studied in RUSO schools in the past 24 months? 2. What factors influence the international students' decision to attend a RUSO school? 3. Are the decision making factors identified in a small number of qualitative interviews of international students generalizable to a larger sample of the population of RUSO international students? 4. What are commonalities, patterns and differences among the factors identified by international students attending RUSO schools? 5. What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about international student's decision-making factors with outcome quantitative instrument data measured on a relevant survey instrument?

Participants in this study must be between 18 and 45 years of age, and currently studying in a RUSO school on an F1 student Visa or have graduated within the past 24 months. If a participant is younger than 18 years old or older than 45, please excuse yourself from this study.

If a participant does not wish to be a subject in this study, please leave the room at this time. The participant does have the right to refuse to answer particular questions, yet remain in the study. Any time during this study if a subject decides they do not wish to continue or participate as a subject, they have the right to discontinue the study and leave the room. There will be no negative impact or retribution against a participant if they decide not to continue participation in the research study.

If a participant has previously been a subject in this same study, do not continue.

Participation in this study is VOLUNTARY, refusal to participate will generate no penalty or loss of benefits; and a subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

- Participation in this study does not involve any known risk or discomfort beyond what is experienced in everyday life.
- Participating in this study will take approximately thirty minutes to one hour.
- Once the Informed Consent has been verbally explained, removal of the Informed Consent cover page will expose the Demographics Survey. Removal of the Informed Consent form (cover page) will be the subjects' acknowledgement of acceptance or consent to participate in this research study. Subjects' may retain Informed Consent form for their records.
- First step, subjects are asked to answer a few demographic questions via paper survey.
- Please do not write your name or any other identifying information on this survey.
- There will be no interventions or manipulation of human subjects as a part of this study.

The benefit to society or the subjects of this research will be related to the potential for future research into the methods of recruitment and retention of international students and international student mobility. In addition, taking into account results of this study, improvements can be made to International Education curricula.

As participants do not provide a name or other identifying information on these documents, protection of identity and participation are protected. Confidentiality is assured and no identifying information is retained. **By removing this form from the demographics survey you are giving your consent to proceed as a participant in this study.**

If you have any questions about this research or subjects rights, please contact the researcher, Marla Stubblefield, or the IRB/ University Research Compliance office at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK at (405) 744-3377 or email irb@okstate.edu.

Marla Stubblefield marla.stubblefield@okstate.edu

Dr. Lynna Ausburn lynna.ausburn@okstate.edu

APPENDIX L

QUALITATIVE RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Recruitment Email

Hello International Student!

I am writing to ask your participation in a study to help us learn more about why international students choose to study in Oklahoma. By participating in this study, you'll be helping us learn how to better serve our international student population once you have arrived to campus, as well as, how to recruit more international students to our campuses to increase the international student population here in Oklahoma. In addition it will assist in building campus and community culture and awareness of internationals on campus.

The interview will take less than 60 minutes. During this time, you'll:

- Meet with the Researcher and answer a few demographic questions such as: male/female, country of origin, how long have you been in the U.S. etc.
- and
- Have a casual conversation with the Researcher at the location of your choice near campus (coffee shop, pizza shop, University Center, library etc.) This conversation will consist of answering a few question regarding why you made the choice you did to study here at Northeastern State University.

That is the extent of your participation in this study. I look forward to hearing from you regarding whether or not you decide to assist with the study.

Please contact the Researcher: Marla Stubblefield at marla.stubblefield@okstate.edu or stubb103@nsuok.edu, via phone in Tahlequah at 918-444-2457 or in Broken Arrow at 918-449-6550

Thank you for your consideration in helping to advance the research for the quality and growth of the international college student population in Oklahoma.

APPENDIX M

QUANTITATIVE RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Recruitment Email

Hello International Student!

I am writing to ask your participation in a study to help us learn more about why international students choose to study in Oklahoma. By participating in this study, you'll be helping us learn how to better serve our international student population once you have arrived to campus, as well as, how to recruit more international students to our campuses to increase the international student population here in Oklahoma. In addition, it will assist in building campus and community culture and awareness of internationals on campus.

The interview will take less than 20 minutes. The survey is completely confidential and anonymous. There are no identifying factors that will connect this survey directly to you. The best part-it's all online! During this time, you'll:

- Answer demographic questions concerning country of origin, male/female, etc. However, there will not be any personal identifiable factors associated to you as a student.

and

- Answer questions via an online survey regarding reasons you chose to study at a college in Oklahoma.

This is the extent of your participation in this study. If you choose to be involved in this study please click the link below that will take you to the online survey. Once you have answered the question please submit the Qualtrix survey and you are finished!

If you have any questions concerning participation, please contact the Researcher: Marla Stubblefield at marla.stubblefield@okstate.edu or stubbl03@nsuok.edu, via phone in Tahlequah at 918-444-2457 or in Broken Arrow at 918-449-6550

Thank you for your consideration in helping to advance the research for the quality and growth of the international college student population in Oklahoma.

((example of link- below))

www.qualitrixlink_survey_tobedetermined.com

APPENDIX N

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Decision Making Factors for International Students Choosing to Study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Research Study

The purpose of this study is to examine factors that contribute to a decision by international students to choose to study in the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO).

- Are you between 18 and 45 years of age?
- Are you an international student on an F1 Visa studying in the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Schools include: Northeastern State University, University of Central Oklahoma, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, East Central University.
- Do you want to contribute important information to a study with the intent of examining why international students choose to study in Oklahoma?

If you answered YES to these questions you may qualify to participate in this research study.

The benefit to society or the subjects of this research will be related to the potential for future research into the methods of recruitment and retention of international students and international student mobility. In addition, taking into account results of this study, improvements can be made to International Education curricula.

The questions for the study are: 1. What is the demographic profile of international students currently studying or who have studied in RUSO schools in the past 24 months? 2. What factors influence the international students' decision to attend a RUSO school? 3. Are the decision making factors identified in a small number of qualitative interviews of international students generalizable to a larger sample of the population of RUSO international students? 4. What are commonalities, patterns and differences among the factors identified by international students attending RUSO schools? 5. What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about international student's decision-making factors with outcome quantitative instrument data measured on a relevant survey instrument?

Participation is strictly VOLUNTARY, no monetary compensation will be provided. Individual information will not be publicized. All information will remain confidential.

If interested, please visit the International Programs Office to inquire.

If you would like more information about this study, please contact Marla Stubblefield at
marla.stubblefield@okstate.edu

APPENDIX O

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Q1 What is your country of birth?

Q2 What is your country of citizenship?

Q3 Are you a male or female?

- Male
- Female

Q4 Which University are you currently attending?

- Northeastern State University
- University of Central Oklahoma
- East Central University
- Northwestern Oklahoma State University
- Southeastern Oklahoma State University

Q5 Please choose an age group that best defines you.

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45

Q6 Did you require English Language Training once you arrived in the United States before you could attend your University?

- Yes
- No

Q7 What best describes your living situation?

- Dorms or University housing - on campus
- Apartment/house - off campus

Q8 Which best describes your status as a student?

- ESL - non degree seeking yet
- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

Q9 Are you studying on a full-time or part-time basis?

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Unsure/don't know

Q10 What type of program are/were you taking? Please check all that apply.

- Bachelor degree
- Masters or doctorate degree
- Diploma or certificate
- English language training
- Other

Q11 Which of the following best describes when you began learning English?

- English is my first language
- Age 12 or earlier
- As a teenager (age 13 to 17)
- As an adult (age 18 and older)

Q12 Have you ever visited the United States before deciding to study here?

- Yes
- No

Q13 Did you attend high school in the United States?

- Yes
- No

Q14 How did you FIRST learn or hear about studying in the United States? Please check all that apply

- Friends
- Family
- Someone for my current university visited my home country
- Agent (4)
- Website of the University
- United States government website
- Other Internet site, please specify _____
- Workshops or school fairs in my home country
- School counselor or teacher in my home country
- Other source, please specify _____

Q15 What other countries (if any) did you consider for your studies?

- I only considered the United States
- Country 1 _____
- Country 2 _____

Q16 What other States did you consider concerning studies in the United States?

- None, I only considered Oklahoma (1)
- Other option _____
- Other option _____

Q17 Was Oklahoma your first choice

- Yes
- No, please indicate which State was your first choice _____

Q18 What other universities (if any) did you apply to for your studies?

- None, this was my first and only choice
- Choice 2 _____
- Choice 3 _____

Q19 How did you hear about YOUR University (the one you are attending now)? Please check all that apply

- Friends
- Family
- Agent
- Someone from my school (the University) visited my home country
- University website
- Other Internet site (please specify) _____
- Workshops or school recruitment fairs in my home country
- US government website
- School counselor or teacher in my home country
- Other source (please specify) _____

Q20 How important were the following things in your decision to study in Oklahoma.

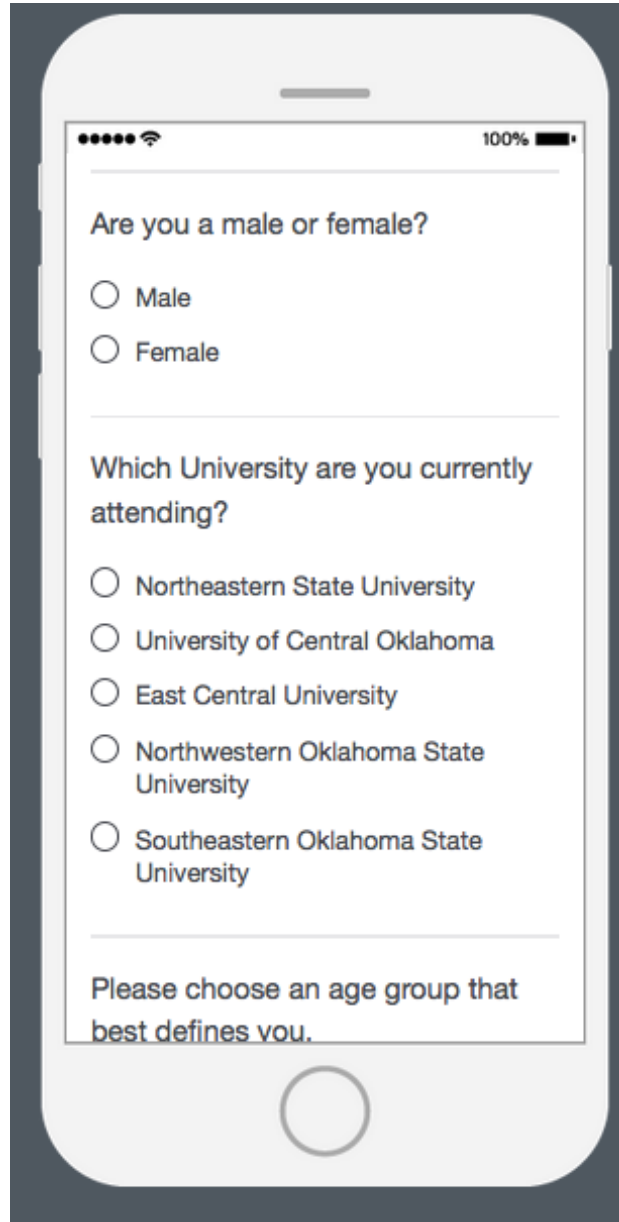
	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (3)	Very Important (4)	Extremely Important (5)
Quality of education (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Costs (tuition and living) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety and security (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendly people (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multicultural environment (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Future employment goal (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desire to live in Oklahoma (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reputation of institution (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew someone attending/working at the university (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunities for on-campus employment (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunity to play a university sport (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q21 How much influence did each of the following have on your decision to attend your current University?

	No influence (1)	Somewhat influential (2)	Neutral (3)	Highly influential (4)	Extremely influential, the main reason I chose this school. (5)
Family (dad, mom, wife, husband, etc.) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends or acquaintances (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School counselor or teacher in my home country (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertisements or stories in magazines, newspapers or on TV or radio shows (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University website (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contact with a recruiter or Coach from the University (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brochures/pamphlets about institution (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Direct communication from University (email, letter, fax, etc.) (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talking with students/alumni from the University (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal visit from an Oklahoma university representative to my home country (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University tuition was affordable / low cost (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunity to play on a university sport team (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX P

MOBILE DEVICE SURVEY OPTION



The image shows a smartphone screen with a survey. The status bar at the top shows signal strength, Wi-Fi, and 100% battery. The survey consists of three sections, each separated by a horizontal line. The first section asks for gender, the second for the university currently attended, and the third asks for an age group.

Are you a male or female?

- Male
- Female

Which University are you currently attending?

- Northeastern State University
- University of Central Oklahoma
- East Central University
- Northwestern Oklahoma State University
- Southeastern Oklahoma State University

Please choose an age group that best defines you.

VITA

Marla Lynn Stubblefield

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: STUDENT MOBILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: DECISION
MAKING FACTORS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CHOOSING TO
STUDY IN THE REGIONAL UNIVERSITY
SYSTEM OF OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2016.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Human Relations at University of Oklahoma Tulsa, OK USA in 2002.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Communication at University of Oklahoma Norman, OK in 1999

Experience:

Northeastern State University

Administration

Director, Language and Cultural Center 2013-2015

Designated School Official 2013-2015

Student Conduct Investigator 2014-2015

Faculty

College of Extended Learning

Advanced English: Comparative Studies – Integrating Global Communities

Lead ESL Faculty Member

College of Business and Technology

Quality Programs – Organizational Development

Tulsa Community College

Faculty Liberal Arts 2006-2011

Professional Memberships: Phi Kappa Phi, International Honor Society, Learning and the Brain Society, Golden Key International Honour Society, Omicron Tau Theta, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development