

Factors that Influence International Students' College Choice Decisions:
Perspectives from Current International Students

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Curry School of Education
University of Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Brian T. Ullman
M.P.A, Indiana University
B.A., University of Virginia

May 2014

© Copyright by
Brian T. Ullman
All Rights Reserved
May 2014

ABSTRACT

Prospective international students who aspire to American higher education stand at the confluence of two vast and complex arenas: college choice and internationalization. The purpose of this study is to learn more about how international undergraduate students in American higher education selected the college or university they attend and to explore how their experience in American higher education influences the factors that they consider important for prospective international students engaged in the college choice process. This study assesses the extent to which the degree of importance ascribed to these factors varies according to key demographic variables and whether there are differences between (1) which factors influenced the college choice decisions of international undergraduate students in U.S. higher education and (2) which factors those same students think are important for prospective international undergraduate students to consider when making college choice decisions.

A total of 134 international undergraduate students, enrolled at nine institutions in the U.S., completed the survey instrument, which used Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*not important*) to 5 (*very important*) to gauge factors' importance. The study's findings suggest that the preeminent factors in previous college choice research remain preeminent in the college choice decisions of today's undergraduate international students. Undergraduate international students who are not satisfied with their college choice decisions, as a group, appear to base their college choice decisions on the same factors as undergraduate international students who are satisfied with their college choice decisions. Undergraduate international students

who attended high school in the U.S. appear to base their college choice decisions on the same factors as undergraduate international students who did not attend high school in the U.S. Undergraduate international students' experiences in American higher education shape what they think should be important for prospective international students to consider when making college choice decisions.

Dedicated to Ari Cameron Ullman

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am exceptionally fortunate to have had an abundance of support throughout the lengthy path that led to this dissertation. I especially thank my dear wife and my loving parents and siblings for their support and patience. I am particularly indebted to Brian Pusser for his indefatigable belief in my ability to see this project through to the end, even when I provided no basis for such optimism and to Dudley Doane for his sustained mentorship and the myriad of professional opportunities he has provided over many years. I express my sincere gratitude to Nancy Deutsch, Carol Anne Spreen, and Christian Steinmetz for serving on my dissertation committee and for sharing their guidance and expertise. I am thankful for all of my friends in Charlottesville and beyond who kept me on target and provided levity along the way.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
ELEMENTS	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	15
III. METHODOLOGY	40
IV. RESULTS	51
V. CONCLUSION.....	83
REFERENCES	99
APPENDIX.....	117

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
1.1 Top 10 Places of Origin of International Students in U.S. Higher Education	7
3.1 Home Countries of Respondents	45
3.2 Demographics of Respondents	47
4.1 Responses by Institution	53
4.2 Importance of Factors in Respondents' College Choice Decisions.....	54
4.3 Mean Value of Factors in Respondents' College Choice Decisions, Grouped by Factor Type (Push, Pull, or Push & Pull).....	54
4.4 Frequency Table of Other Factors that Influenced Respondents' College Choice Decisions.....	55
4.5 Factors for Prospective Undergraduate International Students to Consider When Making College Choice Decisions.....	56
4.6 Mean Value of Factors for Prospective Undergraduate International Students to Consider When Making College Choice Decisions, Grouped by Factor Type	56
4.7 Frequency Table of Other Factors for Prospective Undergraduate International Students to Consider When Making College Choice Decisions.....	57
4.8 Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors in Chinese and Non-Chinese Respondents' College Choice Decisions.....	58
4.9 Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors that Chinese and Non-Chinese Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider.....	60
4.10 Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors in Respondents' College Choice Decisions Grouped by Expected Year of Graduation.....	63
4.11 Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors that Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider, Grouped by Expected Year of Graduation.....	65

4.12 Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors in Respondents' College Choice Decisions Grouped by Satisfaction with College Choice Decision.....	67
4.13 Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors that Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider, Grouped by Satisfaction of College Choice Decision.....	68
4.14 Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors Respondents' College Choice Decisions Grouped by Whether Attended High School in the U.S.....	70
4.15 Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors that Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider, Grouped by Whether Attended High School in U.S.....	71
4.16 Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors in Respondents' College Choice Decisions Grouped by Use of Paid Agents.....	73
4.17 Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors that Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider, Grouped by Use of Paid Agents.....	74
4.18 Item Loadings for the 23 Factors Relating to Respondents' Own College Choice Decisions.....	76
4.19 Item Loadings for the 23 Factors Relating to What Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider.....	79
4.20 Summary of Paired t-test Results for Importance of Factors in Respondents' Own College Choice Decision and if Advising Prospective Students.....	82

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	Page
1.1 International Students by Academic Level, 2011-2012.....	6
1.2 All Students by Academic Level, 2011-2012.....	6
1.3 Enrollment by Institution Type, 2011-2012.....	7
1.4 International Student Enrollment, 1975-2012.....	8
2.1 The Kotler & Fox Model.....	25
2.2 The Boyle Model.....	26
2.3 The Hossler & Gallagher Model.....	27
2.4 Conceptual Framework: International Student College Choice.....	39

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The academic literature refers to “the process of choosing whether and where to attend college” (Bergerson, p. 21, 2009) as *college choice*. Theoretical and empirical research on college choice is plentiful, from which three primary theoretical approaches have emerged: econometric, sociological, and combined process models (Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper, 1999; Kinzie et al., 2004; Paulsen, 1990). Econometric models of college choice assume students are rational actors who analyze the anticipated costs and benefits of college attendance when deciding whether and where to enroll in higher education (Hossler et al., 1999; Jackson, 1978; McDonough, 1997; Paulsen, 1990). Sociological approaches focus on socialization’s role, exploring how socioeconomic status and family conditions influence students’ choices in higher education (Alwin & Otto, 1977; Hossler et al., 1999; Sewell & Shah 1968). Combined process models incorporate elements of multiple perspectives (Kinzie et al., 2004). Hossler and Gallagher’s model of college choice (1987), which is the most frequently cited model in the college choice literature (Bergerson, 2009), uses a combined process approach.

Much of the academic literature on college choice explores the various factors that influence students’ college choice decisions. From this research, three categories of factors emerge: *student characteristics*, e.g. socioeconomic status and scholastic aptitude, *institutional characteristics*, e.g. tuition, reputation, and location, and *environmental characteristics*, e.g. parental involvement and peer influence (DesJardins, Dundar, & Darwin, 2006; Paulsen, 1990).

Different groups of students engage in the college choice process differently (Choudaha, R., Orosz, K. & Chang, L., 2012; Paulsen & St. John, 2002). According to Paulsen and St. John, “There are diverse patterns of student choice, and therefore diverse groups merit study” (p. 192, 2002). Surprisingly, a relatively small body of research specifically examines the college choice process of students who seek higher education outside of their home country (Maringe & Carter, 2007). The “Push-Pull” model, which describes the college choice process of students who pursue higher education abroad, contends that factors in students’ home countries may “push” students into higher education abroad and factors in host countries may “pull” students into colleges and universities in those host countries (Mazzaroul & Souttar, 2002).

Why College Choice Matters

Scholars emphasize the importance of understanding college choice and its “implications for practice, policy, and research” (Bergerson, 2009, p. 1). In an era of increased competition for students, institutions seek more comprehensive knowledge of how students engage in college choice to target marketing and student recruitment efforts (Bergerson, 2009). To combat chronic underrepresentation of certain student groups in higher education, some researchers explore the role of socioeconomic status in the college choice process (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2001; McDonough, 1997; Bergerson, 2009).

College choice also influences student success in substantial ways (Braxton, Vesper, & Hossler, 1995; Stage & Hossler, 2000; Villella & Hu, 1990.) The expectations of higher education that students develop during the college choice process effect student persistence (Braxton, Vesper, & Hossler, 1995) and shape student satisfaction (Stage & Hossler, 2000). Student retention is linked to college choice (Villella and Hu, 1990).

Students who choose to attend less selective institutions than those for which they are qualified, which is known as *undermatching*, may be less likely to graduate (Bowen, Chingos, McPherson & Tobin, 2009). In short, how students engage in the college choice process and their college choice decisions matter.

Students who seek higher education outside of their home country are subject to additional vulnerabilities related to college choice. According to Sherry, Thomas and Chui (2010), “Institutions which do not address the unique needs of international students may leave these students feeling disappointed, unfulfilled, and even exploited” (p. 33). Challenges related to language, culture, and social alienation, among others, may jeopardize some international students’ success if the institutions they attend do not provide adequate resources and support services (Sherry et al., 2010).

Background of the Study – Internationalization as Context

Prospective international students who aspire to American higher education stand at the confluence of two vast and complex arenas: college choice and internationalization. American leaders in education, public policy, and other fields often emphasize the importance of providing students with a global education and highlight the value of internationalizing schools and campuses. References to the economic interdependency and interconnectedness among nations, to the security threats of the 21st century, such as terrorism, flu epidemics, and financial crises, and to the moral imperative of addressing human suffering and poverty frequently highlight the need for increased international awareness and competence (American Council on Education [ACE], 2012; Herfkens, 2006). Educators devoted to the internationalization of higher education are eager to declare its many benefits to all stakeholders in the enterprise of higher education,

including society at large (Marmolejo, 2010), yet what is meant by the term internationalization is not always clear.

Hans de Wit (2002) notes that “one of the fundamental problems we face when dealing with the internationalization of higher education is the diversity of related terms” (p. 103). To some, *international education* may be interchangeable with “international studies, international programs, global education, multicultural education, global studies, the international perspective, and the international dimension” (Arum and Van de Water, 1992). Others use the term international education to refer to activities and programs that “encourage the flow of ideas and people across cultural and international boundaries” (Sowa, 2002) or that develop and inspire “worldmindliness” (Hayden and Thompson, 1995).

Even greater ambiguity surrounds the definition of the term *internationalization* (de Wit, 2002; Knight, 2004; Teichler, 2004). Internationalization may refer to specific educational activities and programs, rationales related to desired institutional outcomes, competencies targeted for development in students, faculty, and staff, and/or processes that infuse international perspectives, relationships, and experiences into all aspects of an institution (de Wit, 2002; Leask, 1999). Jane Knight (2003) defines internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 2). According to the American Council on Education (ACE), institutions pursue internationalization by “incorporating global perspectives into teaching, learning, and research; building international and intercultural competence among students, faculty, and staff; and

establishing relationships and collaborations with people and institutions abroad” (2012, p. 3).

Despite the lack of consensus surrounding its definition, internationalization appears on college campuses in a myriad of manifestations that may be categorized as *classroom oriented*, *campus oriented*, and *externally oriented*. *Classroom oriented* elements include internationalizing what takes place in classrooms - what students learn in their classes and how they learn it. The development of programs and courses in international studies, area studies, international development studies, and the inclusion of international content in disciplinary courses are among the proposed internationalizing tools that may influence students’ experiences in classrooms (Harari, 1992; Pickert & Turlington, 1992). *Campus oriented* manifestations take place outside of the classroom – in international residence halls and at international dinners. Recruiting, enrolling, and integrating international students on campus represent aspects of internationalization that reach well beyond the walls of classrooms through integration with campus life (ACE, 2012; Ellingboe, 1998; Harari, 1992; Wit, 2002). *Externally oriented* facets of internationalization take place away from one’s home campus and require institutional relationships between or among organizations and institutions, such as study abroad, student exchange programs, and branch campuses.

The recruitment, enrollment, and integration of international students on American college campuses constitute a foundational element of internationalization (ACE, 1995; Ellingboe, 1998; Harari, 1992; Wit, 2002). Nearly 680,000 international students were enrolled in American higher education in 2012 (Figure 1.1), with 9.5 percent pursuing associate’s degrees, 36 percent pursuing bachelor’s degrees, 44.2 percent pursuing

graduate or professional degrees, and 10.2 percent enrolled in non-degree programs (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2012). By comparison, among all 14.6 million full-time students in U.S. higher education in 2012, (Figure 1.2), 26 percent were pursuing associate’s degrees, 59 percent were pursuing bachelor’s degrees, and 15 percent were pursuing graduate or professional degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

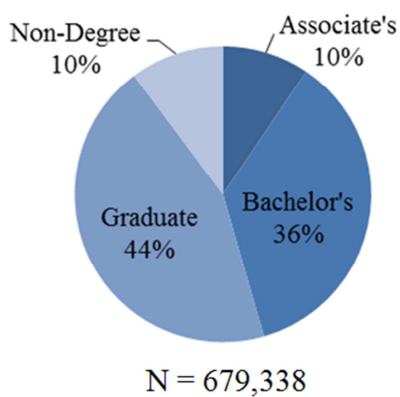


Figure 1.1: International students by academic level, 2011-2012. Data from IIE, 2012

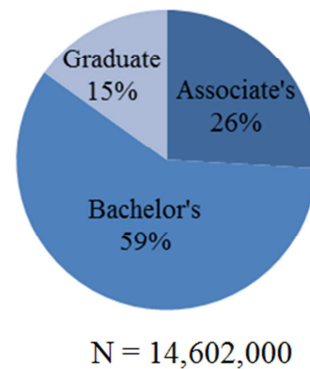
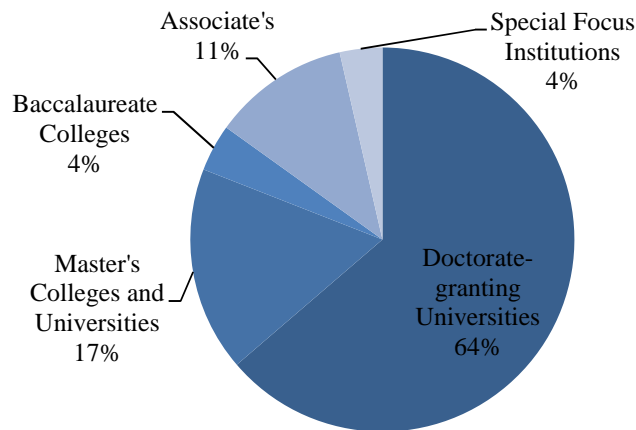


Figure 1.2: All students by academic level, 2011-2012. Data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

International students are enrolled in the array of institution-types that constitute American higher education (Figure 1.3); in 2012, nearly 63 percent attended doctorate-granting universities, about 17 percent attended masters-granting colleges and universities, more than 11 percent attended associates-granting institutions, and four percent attended baccalaureate-granting colleges (IIE, 2012).



N = 764,495

Figure 1.3: Enrollment by institution type, 2011-2012. Includes students on post-completion Optional Practical Training. Data from IIE, 2012.

The international student population in the U.S. has increased 31% from one decade ago (IIE, 2012). In 2011-2012, almost half of all international student enrollments came from China, India, and South Korea (Figure 1.4) – the three top sending countries – with 25 percent coming from China, alone (IIE, 2012). The number of students in the U.S. from China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela, and Spain in 2011-2012 increased by more than 10% when compared to the previous academic year (IIE, 2012).

Table 1.1

Top 10 Places of Origin of International Students in U.S. Higher Education, 2011-2012

Rank	Place of Origin	2011/12	% of Total
1	China	194,029	25.4
2	India	100,270	13.1
3	South Korea	72,295	9.5
4	Saudi Arabia	34,139	4.5
5	Canada	26,821	3.5
6	Taiwan	23,250	3
7	Japan	19,966	2.6
8	Vietnam	15,572	2
9	Mexico	13,893	1.8
10	Turkey	11,973	1.6

Data Source: IIE, 2012

Notwithstanding the years immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Figure 1.5), enrollment of international students in American higher education has risen steadily since the 1970s (IIE, 2012). This increasing presence of international students on American university and college campuses is both an indicator and a component of global trends. As national economies have grown more interconnected and interdependent, and as terms like *globalization* and the *internationalization* have entered the international vernacular, U.S. higher education, too, has become more global. Gary Althen (1995) remarks, “Perhaps the most dramatic on-campus development related at least indirectly to foreign students has been the widespread adoption of the rhetoric of internationalization” (p. 4).

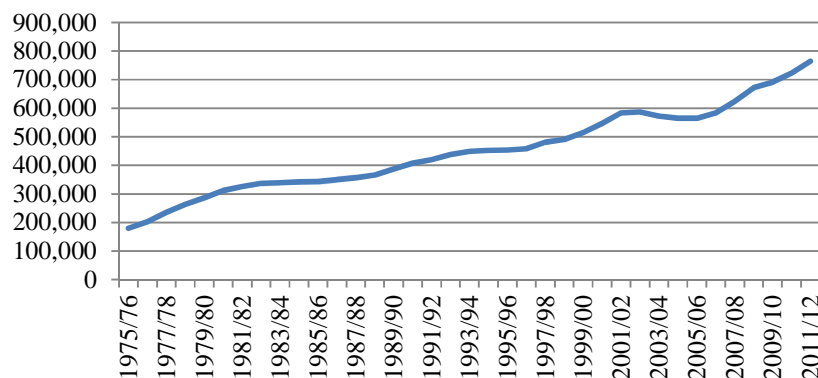


Figure 1.4: International student enrollment, 1975-2012. Data from IIE, 2012.

Among the recognized benefits of international students in American higher education are increasing campus diversity, contributing to learning and the educational mission, boosting local economies, and serving as “a reservoir of goodwill for the United States, perhaps [the nation’s] most underrated foreign-policy asset” (NAFSA, 2007). International students’ economic benefit to the U.S. is nearly \$22 billion dollars, which is the estimated net contribution to the U.S. economy by foreign students and their families

in 2011-2012 (IIE, 2012). The majority of international students in American higher education are funded by personal or family sources (IIE, 2012), since most forms of financial assistance at U.S. institutions is limited to U.S. citizens and permanent residents (IIE, 2012). Institutional financial aid that is available to international students is often restricted to graduate international students as teaching and research assistantships (IIE, 2012). International students' influence extends beyond their contribution to the U.S. economy and into classrooms, student union buildings, quads, and athletic arenas.

The educational benefits of diversity in university classrooms and on college campuses include “the development of complex thinking and socio-cognitive and democratic skills,” (Hurtado, 2005). The U.S. Supreme Court has cited as its preeminent justification for the constitutionality of affirmative action that “the educational benefits of diversity were a compelling governmental interest” (University of Michigan, 2003). In 2003, the Court upheld the University of Michigan Law School's affirmative action policy, stating “that student body diversity promotes learning outcomes” (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). The presence of international students in American higher education is an integral part of campus diversity and fosters greater cultural and international awareness (McIntire & Willer, 1992). Institutions and commentators frequently seek initiatives to facilitate greater interaction between international students and domestic students (Zhai, 2004). According to McIntire and Willer, “the benefits derived from the diversity that the presence of international students lends to the student body on a college and university campus are undeniable” (1992, p. xii).

The presence of international students on American college campuses is central to the internationalization of U.S. higher education. Before international students move into

their American dorm rooms and walk into an American classroom, they must first engage in the college choice process.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this research is to learn more about how international undergraduate students in American higher education selected the college or university they attend and to explore how their experience in American higher education influences the factors that they consider important for prospective international students engaged in the college choice process. In addition to learning more about how international undergraduate students in the U.S. made their college choice decisions, this study examines the factors that current international undergraduate students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions. This study assesses the extent to which the degree of importance ascribed to these factors varies according to key demographic variables and whether there are differences between (1) which factors influenced the college choice decisions of international undergraduate students in U.S. higher education and (2) which factors those same students think are important for prospective international undergraduate students to consider when making college choice decisions.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study's contributions to the literature about international students and college choice are both theoretical and concrete. Because the ways in which different groups of students engage in college choice can be different, this study, which examines how international students in American higher education engage in college choice, can

“provide a basis for refining theory” (Paulsen & St. John, 2002, p. 192). The study offers a model of college choice for international students. More concretely, the study contributes to the body of knowledge about the various factors that influence the college choice decisions of international undergraduate students in American higher education.

By exploring the factors that undergraduate international students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making college choice decisions, this study also contributes to the body of knowledge available to prospective international undergraduate students and their families when navigating the complex process of college choice. Information plays an important role in college choice, with access to better information often leading to better results for students. Students with better access to information about colleges and universities during the college choice process tend to be more satisfied with the institutions they attend (Hamrick & Hossler, 1996). Conversely, scholars cite the lack of information during the college choice process as a primary factor in college undermatching (Bowen, et al., 2009). Undermatching occurs when students choose to attend a less selective institution than those for which they are qualified, which appears to reduce the graduation rates of undermatched students (Bowen, et al., 2009).

Despite the availability of popular guidance and informational resources, much about college search and choice in the U.S. is poorly understood by many prospective international students (Hathaway, 2011). In China, which sends more students to the U.S. than any other country, as many as “80% of Chinese applicants to American undergraduate programs” rely on third-party agents to help clarify and to negotiate the admissions process (Melcher, 2010, p. 4). While reliance on third party agents in China

may have cultural underpinnings, Chinese students cite “lack of knowledge in [the] application process” and “in foreign institutions” as primary reasons for using agents (Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011, p. 11). Many Chinese students and parents are not familiar with “differences among universities and about campus culture, application requirements, and other information considered common knowledge in American society.” (Hathaway, 2011, A26). The process can be especially opaque for students who attend schools that do not offer guidance counselors and whose parents “lack the English skills to help their children differentiate between an accredited college and a diploma mill.”(Hathaway, 2011, A26).

Most popular resources that aim to explicate college search and choice for students and families are normative and atheoretical. Research based guidance that is grounded in the relevant literature is rare. Sound informational resources can be particularly important to international students engaged in the college choice process because of the information asymmetries inherent in the delivery of higher education (Breneman, Pusser & Turner, 2006). Institutions of higher education know more about the educational experiences they provide than their prospective students; this characteristic can lead to inaccurate assessments of institutions during the college choice process and makes students susceptible to exploitation (Pusser, 2002).

By comparing the factors that influenced the college choice decisions of international undergraduate students in U.S. higher education with the factors that those same students think are important for prospective international undergraduate students to consider when making college choice decisions, this study may reveal which factors tend to be over-emphasized or under-emphasized during the college choice process. This study

asks international undergraduate students currently enrolled in American colleges and universities to reflect on their experience in American higher education while contrasting the factors that influenced their own college choice decisions with the factors that they think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making college choice decisions. Prospective international undergraduate students, their families and counselors, and U.S. colleges and universities may benefit from this work.

According to Hossler et al., the “college choice process is a complex phenomenon” (1999, p. 281). Students seek reliable informational resources to prepare for and to navigate this complicated process, and such resources may be less accessible to international students (Hathaway, 2011; Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986). Current undergraduate students have experienced both the college choice process and undergraduate student life; not surprisingly, research indicates that current college students are among high school students “most preferred sources of information” during the college choice process (Paulsen, 1990, p. 53). Yet, collections of current international student perspectives on the college search process are limited, and research based inquiries on this subject are particularly scarce. Principal among this study’s aims is to harness current international students’ viewpoints to help prospective international students and their families navigate and clarify the complex process of college choice.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What factors influenced the college choice decisions of undergraduate international students in American higher education?
2. What factors do undergraduate international students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions?
3. Does the degree of importance ascribed to these factors vary according to key demographic variables?
4. Does the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ1 differ from the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ2?

DEFINITIONS

College Choice – “The process of choosing whether and where to attend college” (Bergerson, p. 21, 2009).

Internationalization - “The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, p. 2, 2003).

International Students – Students enrolled in an American institution of higher education who are neither U.S. citizens nor permanent residents of the U.S. and whose international student advising offices consider international students.

Prospective International Students - Students who are neither U.S. citizens nor permanent residents of the U.S. and who aspire to American higher education.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internationalization as Context

By the middle of the 1990s, as the term *globalization* was entering the American English vernacular, colleges and universities responded to the growing public and governmental emphasis on the global economy and other global forces by incorporating internationalization into their missions (Levin, 2001). Internationalization, though, is an ambiguous term that can represent different things to different people, even among experts in higher education (Wit, 2002; Knight, 2004). Jane Knight (2004) explains the confusion surrounding the term:

For some people, it means a series of international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers; international linkages, partnerships, and projects; and new, international academic programs and research initiatives. For others, it means the delivery of education to other countries through new types of arrangements such as branch campuses or franchises using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques. To many, it means the inclusion of an international, intercultural, and/or global dimension into the curriculum and teaching learning process. Still others see international development projects and, alternatively, the increasing emphasis on trade in higher education as internationalization.

(p. 6)

Perhaps most generally, internationalization refers to the “infusion” (Leask, 1999) of international perspectives, relationships, and experiences into higher education.

Despite the lack of consensus surrounding its definition, internationalization appears on college campuses in a myriad of manifestations that may be categorized as *classroom oriented*, *campus oriented*, and *externally oriented*.

Classroom Oriented Manifestations

The internationalization of higher education includes internationalizing what takes place in classrooms - what students learn in their classes and how they learn it. A preeminent component of internationalization is the internationalization of curriculum (ACE, 2012; Klasek, 1992; Leask, 1999). Leask (1999) describes the mission of internationalizing curriculum as seeking to “develop multi-cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication skills while achieving the specific skills and knowledge objectives appropriate to the discipline area” (p. 1). A conspicuous and popular form of internationalizing the curriculum is the adoption of foreign language requirements (ACE, 1995; Dobbert, 1998). While more demanding than most commentators, Dobbert (1998) argues that proper internationalization requires that students “speak two to three languages in addition to English at the level of 7 or above on a 10 point scale...” (p. 65).

The development of programs, concentrations, and courses in international studies, area studies, international development studies, and the inclusion of international content in disciplinary courses are also among the proposed internationalizing tools that may influence students’ experiences in classrooms (ACE, 2012; Harari, 1992; Pickert & Turlington, 1992). The enrollment of international students, hiring international faculty, employing visiting faculty from other countries, using comparative approaches in teaching and research, and focusing faculty development and rewards on developing international expertise can be part of an institution’s internationalizing efforts (ACE, 1995; Harari, 1992). Furthermore, an institution may realize its mission to internationalize the content of its courses by using texts that incorporate more

international perspectives and applications and by introducing international issues relevant to course material (Leask, 1999).

The classroom oriented dimension of internationalization influences what students learn in their coursework. Expanded curricular requirements and course offerings in foreign languages and international area studies affect the courses in which students enroll and the subjects they encounter during their college students experience. Classroom oriented initiatives of internationalization may also appear in the way faculty members teach existing courses.

Campus Oriented Manifestations

Some aspects of internationalization take place outside of the classroom. As Ellingboe (1998) suggests, “international residence halls, conference planning centers, student unions, career centers, cultural immersions and language houses, and student organizations” are all a part of the co-curricular component of internationalization (p. 205). International and intercultural events, like international food fairs and campus-wide festivals, and language partner programs that group international and domestic students are elements of internationalization strategies that extend beyond the classroom experience (ACE, 2012; Leask, 1999; Wit, 2002). Recruiting, enrolling, and integrating international students on campus represent another element of internationalization that reaches well beyond the walls of classrooms through integration with campus life (ACE, 2012; Ellingboe, 1998; Harari, 1992; Wit, 2002).

Campus oriented initiatives influence student housing options, the nature of on-campus social activities, and student population demographics. Perhaps most profoundly, these elements of campus oriented initiatives can impact student interactions with other

students (ACE, 2012, p. p.13). The presence of international students on a college campus can increase opportunities for students to interact with a student of another nationality or culture. The coordination of internationally related activities that seek the attendance and participation of students from all backgrounds adds to the arena of social and educational events available to students while providing opportunities for interaction among students. The availability of student housing options that are associated with international themes fosters student interaction and relationships that are an integral component of the college student experience.

Externally Oriented Manifestations

Externally oriented aspects of internationalization take place away from one's home campus and require institutional relationships between or among organizations and institutions, such as study abroad, student exchange programs, and branch campuses (ACE, 2012; Ellingboe, 1998; Klasek, 1992; Wit, 2002). International study opportunities are a significant piece of providing students with substantial international exposures; Dobbert (1998) suggests that a "globalized person...must have resided in at least two non-English speaking countries, in non-Americanized environments, for at least one year each," and he calls upon colleges and universities to provide such opportunities (p. 65). Global competition within higher education, and the corresponding global flows of "people, capital and knowledge" (Marginson, 2006, p. 35), represents an externally oriented manifestation of internationalization. Elite research universities in English speaking countries benefit from these global flows (Marginson, 2006).

Consortia and partnerships among institutions represent another type of externally oriented initiative (ACE, 2012; Harari, 1992; Overton, 1992). Such relationships with

universities in other countries can facilitate student and faculty exchange for collaborative research and study (ACE, 2012; Harari, 1992). Universitas 21, a network of 24 research universities in 12 countries and territories, facilitates collaboration among partner institutions in an effort to develop researcher engagement, educational innovation, and global student experiences (Universitas 21, 2012). Networks of institutions in the same geographical area can also expand opportunities for international and comparative study (Overton, 1992). Overton (1992) writes of the Co-Operative Education Program, which included colleges and universities in the Baltimore, Maryland metropolitan area and allowed full-time students at any member institution to enroll in courses at any other member institution not offered at their home institutions “free of charge” (p. 173). This consortium expanded student opportunities for international education at member institutions by facilitating course enrollment in area studies courses that one’s home institution did not offer (Overton, 1992).

Externally oriented initiatives can expand learning opportunities for students and research collaborations among faculty. Study abroad programs, consortia affiliated exchange agreements, and internships associated with institutional partnerships may supplement on campus experiences.

International Students in American Higher Education

The recruitment, enrollment, and integration of international students on American college campuses constitute a foundational element of internationalization (ACE, 1995; Ellingboe, 1998; Harari, 1992; Wit, 2002), and a growing amount of research focuses on this student population. Among the most salient aspects of this population is that it is diverse; “not all international students are the same” (Choudaha, et al., 2012, p. 2).

Given the scarcity of U.S. based sources of financial aid for which international students are eligible, more than 80 percent of international undergraduate students' primary funding comes from personal and family sources (IIE, 2012). This suggests that the families of many international undergraduate students are of high socioeconomic status and those which are not make substantial financial sacrifices. Differences abound among students from different countries and geographical regions as well as among students within the same countries and geographical regions (Choudaha, et al., 2012).

There are also differences among institutional goals for international undergraduate students and international graduate students. In addition to fostering internationalization and the educational benefits of student diversity on university campuses (Hurtado, 2005; McIntire & Willer, 1992), some institutions recruit international undergraduate students, in part, to increase the full-tuition-paying student population (Altbach and Knight, 2007). Many research universities rely heavily on international graduate students, who are often the majority of full-time graduate students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, to maintain and support research excellence (Anderson, 2013).

The variety of tools that U.S. institutions use to attract international students to their campuses may be divided into three categories. *Traditional* recruitment strategies include participating in international college fairs and school tours (Choudaha, et al., 2012; Dessoiff, 2009) and relying on international alumni to perform some of the recruitment ground work (Dessoiff, 2009). *Online* recruitment strategies include institutional web sites, videos, Facebook and Twitter accounts, virtual college fairs and webinars specifically for prospective international students (Choudaha, Chang, L. & Kono, Y., 2013; Dessoiff, 2009). The use of *third-party organizations* is another means of

international student recruitment. In 1999, the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs initiated EducationUSA to offer a network of education advising centers throughout the world (Ives, 2003). Accredited institutions in the U.S may work with EducationUSA's collection of more than 450 advising centers, funded by the U.S. government, to assist in their recruitment efforts (Choudaha, et al., 2013; Dessoff, 2009). Many institutions also work with non-governmental organizations and paid agents to facilitate their recruitment efforts (Dessoff, 2009). This practice of paying private agents to recruit students at U.S. institutions is controversial (Dessoff, 2009).

The most heavily researched subject areas concerning international students in American higher education are those related to the psychological and social impact of the international student experience on international students, and within this realm, international student adjustment and adaptation are preeminent. International student adjustment refers to the "adaptive process of sojourners [international students] in their overseas assignments" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 235). International student adaptation refers to "the dynamic process by which individuals [in unfamiliar environments] establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with those environments" (Kim, 2001, p.31). Much of this research on adjustment and adaptation incorporates the U-Curve hypothesis (Lysgaard, 1955), culture shock (Oberg, 1960), the transitional experience (Adler, 1975), and the transcultural experience (Mansell, 1981).

The U-Curve hypothesis (Lysgaard, 1955) postulates that the process of adjustment to a new culture follows a U-shaped curve; initial ease and success give way to feelings of loneliness and unhappiness, which diminish as one returns to feeling

integrated and well-adjusted (p. 51). Subsequent research has supported the U-Curve hypothesis (Zapf, 1993), expanded the U-Curve hypothesis (W-Curve hypothesis, Gullahorn, 1963), and refuted the U-Curve hypothesis (Church, 1992; Nash, 1991).

Culture shock (Oberg, 1960) encompasses the emotional anxiety and distress that one may experience when in an unfamiliar culture. Oberg (1960) delineated four stages of culture shock through which individuals pass: honeymoon, hostility, recovery, and adjustment. Adler's (1975) notion of the transitional experience refers to "a movement from a state of low self- and cultural awareness to a state of high self- and cultural awareness," which sojourners encounter (p.15). The phases of a transitional experience through which sojourners move are contact, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, and independence (Adler, 1975). The transcultural experience (Mansell, 1981) is a "multi dimensional process of adaptation" (p. 93), which includes phases of "alienation, marginality, acculturation, and duality" (p. 101).

Much of the literature on international student adjustment and adaptation incorporates, critiques, or amends one or more of these aforementioned conceptual constructs. Five prominent sources of psychological distress among international students that appear in the literature of international student adjustment and adaptation concern language related challenges, differences in education systems, differences in learning strategies, faculty-student communication, and "influences of sociocultural environment on academic adjustment" (Wang, 2004, p. 17). Studies addressing international students' experiences with perceived discrimination (Lee & Rice, 2007; Kim & Kim, 2010) and racial microaggressions – "subtle verbal, nonverbal, or environmental slights" – also appear in the literature (Kim & Kim, 2010).

Peripherally related to adjustment and adaptation, there is a much smaller body of research concerning the psychological and social impact of the sojourn on the student that focuses on international student attitudes. Researchers have conducted studies on the attitudes of international students towards seeking psychological and counseling services (Leong, 1986; Komiya & Eels, 2001; Zhang & Dixon, 2003). Zhang and Dixon (2003) found that greater degrees of acculturation correlated positively with more positive attitudes toward seeking psychological services.

The area of research related to international students in American higher education at the center of this study concerns international students and college choice.

The College Choice Literature

Theoretical and empirical research on college choice, “the process of choosing whether and where to attend college” (Bergerson, p. 21, 2009) is plentiful. Anticipated economic and demographic shifts in the 1980s, which many leaders in higher education thought would result in substantial challenges to college enrollment, inspired a thrust in college choice research during the final decades of the 20th century (Paulsen, p. 3, 1990). Institutions of higher education could be better prepared for “the possibility of reduced enrollments, budget deficits, and retrenchment” by having an empirical understanding of how students make decisions to attend particular institutions (Paulsen, p. 6, 1990). While the impetus for college choice research resonated chiefly with enrollment managers within higher education, the broader audience and beneficiaries of such inquiry include public policy makers, guidance counselors, parents, and students.

Educational researchers bring different disciplinary lenses to topics of inquiry, which often generate different theoretical approaches to the same issue. Throughout the

decades of college choice research, three primary theoretical approaches have emerged: econometric, sociological, and combined process models (Hossler et al., 1999; Kinzie et al., 2004; Paulsen, 1990).

Econometric approaches to college choice rely on the foundational economic principle of maximizing utility (Hossler et al., 1999; Jackson. 1978). Students, assumed to be rational actors with access to perfect information, analyze the anticipated costs and benefits of college attendance, akin to investment decision-making, when deciding whether and where to enroll in higher education (Hossler et al., 1999; McDonough, 1997; Paulsen, 1990). Costs that students consider could include direct expenses, such as for tuition and housing, and also an array of other costs, including opportunity costs, loss of friendships in one's hometown, etc. (Hossler et al., 1999). Anticipated job prospects and expected earnings after earning a degree as well as any variety of other benefits, such as improved social life and added respect, may factor into students cost-benefit analysis (Hossler et al., 1999).

Kotler and Fox (1985) offer a model of college choice that is typical of econometric approaches (Hossler et al., 1999). The model (Figure 1) delineates four stages - deciding to explore higher education, gathering information, evaluating institutions, and choosing an institution - with students basing their decisions on risks and costs at each stage (Kotler & Fox, 1985).

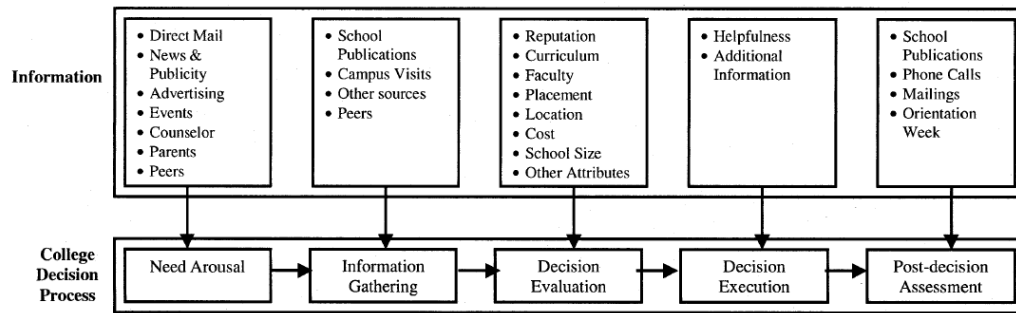


Figure 2.1: The Kotler & Fox Model - Interaction between information and the college decision process. From Kotler & Fox, 1985, p. 212.

Sociological approaches to college choice focus on how socialization affects whether and where students attend college (Hossler et al., 1999; McDonough, 1997; Paulsen, 1990). Many of these models are based on the status attainment process, and they explore how socioeconomic status, family conditions, and school context influence students' higher education aspirations and choices (Alwin & Otto, 1977; Hossler et al., 1999; Sewell & Shah 1968). Hossler et al. (1999) write, "If economic models open possibilities for students through rational choice, status-attainment models describe a process that has acted to narrow students' possibilities since they were born (p. 144)."

Boyle (1966) offers a social status attainment model of factors that influence the educational aspirations of high schools students. The model (Figure 2) depicts how the social and academic contexts of high schools relate to personal academic abilities and students' aspirations for attending higher education (Hossler et al., 1999).

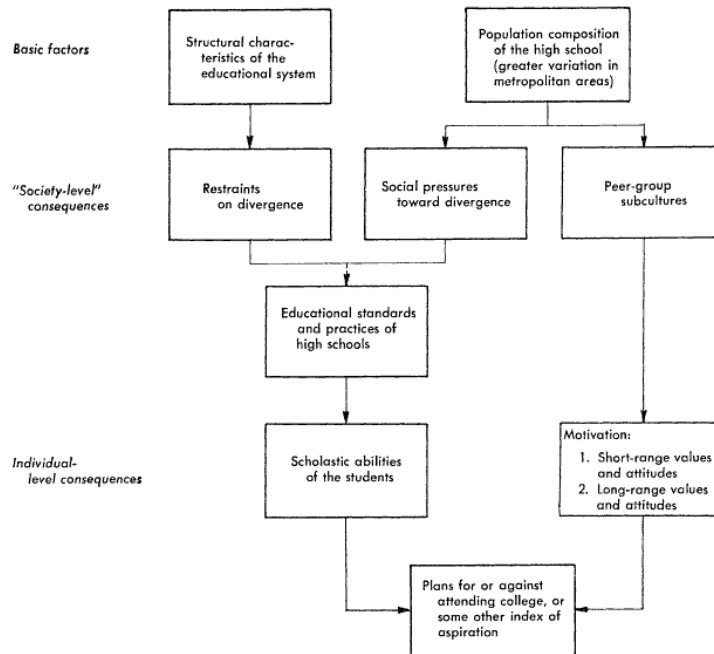


Figure 2.2: The Boyle Model - Schematic diagram of factors leading to a variation in the aspirations of students attending different high schools. From Boyle, 1966, p. 633.

Sociological approaches to college choice also include social-psychological models that focus on the variety of factors, like experiences, characteristics, and environments, which shape student-institution fit (Paulsen, 1990). These models explore students' own evaluation of their fit with prospective institutions based on characteristics like academic program offerings, campus social climate, tuition costs, and location (McDonough, 1997, p. 3). Pervin (1968) explains "fit," as understood within the field of psychology, with the following:

for each individual there are environments (interpersonal and non-inter-personal) which more or less match the characteristics of his (or her) personality. A "match" or "best-fit" of individual to environment is viewed as expressing itself in high performance, satisfaction, and little stress in the system...

(p. 56)

Combined process approaches to college choice incorporate elements of multiple perspectives to generate a more comprehensive view of college choice as a developmental process (Hossler et al., 1999; Kinzie et al., 2004). Hossler and Gallagher's eminent model of college choice (1987), which is the most often cited model in the college choice literature (Bergerson, 2009), uses a combined process approach.

Hossler and Gallagher's model of college choice (Figure 3) describes a three-phase process that students experience. Phase one, *predisposition*, corresponds to the decision to go to college, phase two, *search*, refers to the process of seeking information about specific institutions and determining which characteristics are most important, and phase three, *choice*, in which students complete the application process and choose an institution (Hossler et al., 1999). At each phase, the interaction of various factors influences student outcomes.

Model Dimensions	Influential Factors		Student Outcomes
	Individual Factors	Organizational Factors	
Predisposition (Phase One)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Characteristics • Significant Others • Educational Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Characteristics 	Search for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. College Options b. Other Options
Search (Phase Two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student preliminary college values • Student search activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College and University search activities (search for students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Choice set b. Other Options
Choice (Phase Three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice Set 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College and University courtship activities 	Choice

Figure 2.3: The Hossler & Gallagher Model. From Hossler & Gallagher, 1987, p. 208.

Emerging Literature on College Choice

Some emerging models of college choice (Perna, 2006; Tierney & Venegas, 2009) offer an alternative approach from within the context of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory (1977), which suggests that social organizations value certain types of capital over others and that individuals with the favored types of capital may more easily negotiate complex systems (Bergerson, 2009). This notion of capital as power - with economic capital representing power associated with monetary value, social capital representing power associated with personal connections, and cultural capital representing power associated with cultural status and knowledge (Bergerson, 2009) - can affect the realm of educational opportunities and informational resources that are available to students and their families (Bergerson, 2009; McDonough, 1997).

Perna's conceptual model delineates four layers or contexts that influence college choice (2006). Social capital, cultural capital, and demographic characteristics constitute the foundational layer in Perna's model, which, in the tradition of Bourdieu, she calls *habitus* (2006). *School and community context*, including school characteristics and the availability of resources related to college, *higher education context*, including institutional characteristics and recruitment, and *social, economic, and policy context*, including the labor market and government policies toward higher education, form the other layers of Perna's model (2006).

Factors That Influence College Choice

Throughout the last several decades, interested scholars have sought to explore the various factors that influence students' college choice decisions. Three categories of factors emerge from the literature: *student characteristics*, e.g. socioeconomic status and

scholastic aptitude, *institutional characteristics*, e.g. tuition, reputation, and location, and *environmental characteristics*, e.g. parental involvement and peer influence (DesJardins, Dunder, & Darwin, 2006; Paulsen, 1990). This section reviews these three categories of factors in the research literature from within the framework of Hossler and Gallagher's three phases of college choice.

Predisposition

Student Characteristics. Several studies have linked students' scholastic achievement with aspiration to attend higher education; students who are successful in the classroom are more likely to aspire to college attendance (Gardner, Ritblatt, & Beatty, 2000; Hossler et al., 1999; Paulsen, 1990). The socioeconomic status of students also affects predisposition. Students from families with high incomes are more likely to aspire to college attendance (Hossler and Stage, 1989; Paulsen, 1990). Students from low socioeconomic status may believe that college attendance is too expensive for them to attend (Bergeson, 2009).

Institutional Characteristics. Several studies suggest that supportive teachers and counselors in high school contribute to students being more likely to aspire to attending college (Bergeson, 2009, McDonough, Korn, & Yamasaki, 1997; Muhammad, 2008; Paulsen, 1990; Rosenbaum, Miller, & Krei, 1996). Students who take college preparatory courses in high school tend to aspire to college attendance (Paulsen, 1990).

Environmental Characteristics. Among the more significant predictors for attendance in higher education are parental involvement, encouragement, and support in their children's education (Bergeson, 2009; Hamrick & Stage, 1995; Hossler et al., 1999; Paulsen, 1990; Perna & Titus, 2005; Ramirez, 2001). Students whose parents, siblings,

and extended family have higher educational attainment are more likely to want to attend college (Beregson, 2009; Paulsen, 1990). Students with peers who aspire to higher education are more likely to aspire to higher education, themselves (Beregson, 2009; Paulsen, 1990; Perez & McDonough, 2008).

Search

Student Characteristics. Students with greater academic achievement and high standardized test scores generally consider and apply to a larger number of institutions (Hurtado, Inkleas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997; Paulsen, 1990). Research also demonstrates how socioeconomic status impacts the search phase of college choice. Students from higher socioeconomic statuses have greater access to information relevant to students in the search phase (Beregson, 2009; McDonough, 1997; Person and Rosenbaum, 2006), and are more likely to hire independent educational consultants (Beregson 2009; McDonough, Korn, & Yamasaki, 1997). Affluent students consider more prestigious institutions and institutions in a larger geographical area (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; McDonough, 1997; Hossler et al., 1999).

Institutional Characteristics. Some research indicates that guidance from high school teachers and counselors is a significant factor for students in the search phase, especially for students with low socioeconomic status (Beregson, 2009; Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Plank & Jordan, 2001). Guidance counselors are often among students' most frequently used sources of information about colleges and universities during their search (Paulsen, 1990). Other researchers emphasize the minimal role that high school personnel have on the search process (Beregson, 2009; Freeman, 1997) or suggest a "declining influence of the high school counselor" (Rowe, 2002, p. 51).

Characteristics of universities and colleges begin to influence the college choice process when students enter the search phase. Promotional materials, both online and in print, from institutions of higher education influence students' search (Bergeson, 2009, p. 26). Students often consider the academic quality and reputation of institutions to be among the most important aspects of colleges and universities during the search phase (Paulsen, 1990). The academic programs and majors available at an institution influence students' search (Hossler et al., 1999; McDonough, 1997). Costs, availability of financial aid, and the location of institutions are also among the important parameters that students consider during the search phase (Braxton, 1990; Paulsen, 1990). Many students also consider the campus life and social atmosphere of colleges and universities when searching for their set of institutions (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Capraro, Patrick, & Wilson, 2004).

Environmental Characteristics. Parents can play a significant role in the search phase, as their children begin developing their selection of possible institutions (Bergeson, 2009, Galotti & Mark 1994; Hossler et al., 1999). Parents, current college students, and college graduates are among "the most preferred sources of information about college attributes in the search and application phase" (Paulsen, 1990, p. 53). Research suggests that peers and friends are also important sources of information during the college search (McDonough, 1997; Paulsen, 1990).

Choice

Student Characteristics. The academic reputation and prestige of an institution are often among the most salient factor in the decision process for students with high academic achievement (Avery & Hoxby, 2004; Braxton, 1990). Students with higher

socioeconomic status are more likely to attend prestigious colleges and universities (Bergeson, 2009; Bowen, et al., 2009; Hearn, 1991). Several emerging models of college choice focus on the impact of socioeconomic status on choice (Perna, 2006; Bergeson, 2009) and on undermatching (Bowen, et al., 2009).

Institutional Characteristics. Characteristics of high schools can affect their students' enrollment decisions (Bergeson, 2009). Specifically, research has found that connections between high schools and colleges and universities (Mullen, 2009; Wolniak & Engberg, 2007), the level of academic achievement among students at high schools (Gardner, Ritblatt, & Beatty, 2000), high schools' counselors and counseling resources (McDonough, 1997; Perna et al., 2008), and the extent of college preparatory academic work available at high schools (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004) can all influence students as they make their college choices.

College costs and financial aid are salient factor in students' college choice decisions (Bergeson, 2009; Paulsen, 1990; Reay, Davies, David, & Ball, 2001), especially for students with disadvantaged socioeconomic status and of color (Dynarski, 2003; McPherson & Shapiro, 1998). Research also shows that the location of an institution (Bergeson, 2009; Braxton, 1990, DesJardins et al., 1999; Paulsen, 1990; Reay, Davies, David, and Ball, 2001), the courses and majors offered (Bergeson, 2009, DesJardins et al., 1999; Paulsen, 1990), impression of student-institution fit (Bergeson 2009, Reay et al., 2001), success of athletics teams (Letawsky, Schneider, Pedersen & Palmer, 2003; Paige & McClintock, 1984), and campus life and social atmosphere (Bergeson, 2009; Paulsen, 1990) can all serve as factors that influence college choice decisions. An institution's average class size, demographic profile of the student body,

including the percentages of minority and international students, religious affiliation, and the availability of student support services may be important factors in college choice (Paige & McClintock, 1984).

Students often cite the academic quality and reputation of the institution as important factors (Bergeson, 2009, Johnson & Stewart, 1991; Paulsen, 1990). Recent studies have suggested that the influence of rankings on prospective students' college choice decisions has increased over the last couple of decades (Hesel, 2013).

Environmental Characteristics. Parental influence can shape college choice decisions (Dixon & Martin, 1991; Hossler et al., 1999; McDonough, 1997), and may “act primarily as a veto,” in some cases (MacDermott, Conn, & Owen, 1987, p. 9). Friends are also “consistently influential” (McDonough, 1997, p. 4), and the preferences of guidance counselors can also be important (Paige & McClintock, 1984).

International College Choice

The literature on college choice as it pertains to students pursuing higher education in their home country is robust. The literature on international students and college choice is relatively thin (Maringe & Carter, 2007). The reviewed research in the previous section is not focused specifically on international students, yet the findings are relevant and applicable to the college choice process of international students (Chen, 2005). This section considers college choice literature that examines the college choice process of those students who seek higher education outside of their home country.

The Push-Pull Model

Separate from the aforementioned prevailing approaches to college choice is the “Push-Pull” model, which describes the college choice process of students who pursue

higher education abroad (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002). The Push-Pull model, originally conceived to explain aspects of international migration (Lee, 1966), serves as the foundation for Mazzaroul and Soutar's (2002) exploration of college choice. The model proposes three stages of the international student's college choice process: *deciding to pursue higher education at home or abroad, selecting a host country, and choosing an institution* (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002). Their research illuminates four primary "push" influences that motivate students to seek higher education abroad: the perception that education overseas is of a higher quality, the unavailability or inaccessibility of the desired program of study in a student's home country, the desire to become more familiar with a new culture, and the intention to live in the host country following completion of the program of study (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002).

Among the principal "pull" influences that influence choice of host country are knowledge of the host country and the perceived environment and lifestyle of host country (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002). The chief "pull" influences on choice of institution in the host country include an institution's academic reputation, its links with institutions already known by the student, and personal recommendations by alumni of the institution (Mazzaroul & Soutar 2002).

Factors that Influence College Choice in the International Context

Interested scholars have sought to explore the various factors that influence the college choice decisions of international students. This section reviews the factors that appear in this relatively thin research literature from within the framework of the Push-Pull model's three stages of college choice.

Deciding to Pursue Education Abroad

As previously mentioned, Mazzaroul and Soutar (2002) isolated several key motivations for students to pursue their higher education outside of their home country: the perception that education overseas is of a higher quality, the unavailability or inaccessibility of the desired program of study in a student's home country, the desire to become more familiar with a new culture, and the intention to live in the host country following completion of the program of study. Political oppression in one's home country, "e.g. students...who contended with a hostile military Government which devalued academic success and undermined the morale of the University," may also contribute to a student's decision to study overseas (Cox, 1988, p. 180).

Selecting Host Country

Among the major factors that serve to influence international students' selection of a host country is the perceived quality of education in the host country (Bodycott, 2009; Kemp, Madden & Simspon, 1998; Neice & Braun, 1977; Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986). Students are more likely to consider pursuing higher education in a country and location about which they have knowledge and familiarity (Kemp, Madden & Simspon, 1998; Neice & Braun, 1977; Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986) and where their friends and relatives live or have studied (Bodycott, 2009; Neice & Braun, 1977). Preferences of family members may also influence students' choices of host country (Pimpa, 2005). Other factors that may affect an international student's selection of a host country include the availability of scholarship assistance (Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986), the perceived lifestyle and environment (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002; Neice & Braun 1977), the language(s) (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002) the geographic location of the host country (Kemp, Madden,

& Simson, 1998) and the perceived level of crime and racial discrimination in the host country (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002).

Choosing Institution

The academic reputation of an institution (Leong & Sedlacek, 1982; Neice & Braun, 1977; Choudaha, et al., 2012) and whether an institution offers the desired program of study (Bodycott, 2009; Neice & Braun, 1977) appear to be significant factors in international students' decisions to attend a particular institution. Research also indicates that U.S. university representatives (Chung, Fam, and Holdsworth, 2009), recommendations from family and friends (Choudaha, et al., 2012; Leong & Sedlacek, 1982), the location of the institution (Bodycott, 2009; Leong & Sedlacek, 1982), the size of the institution (Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986), the level of cultural diversity at the institution (Lee, 2008), the cost of attendance and availability of financial aid (Choudaha, et al., 2012; Joseph & Joseph, 2000, Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986), and availability of support services (Bodycott, 2009; Choudaha, et al., 2012) influence the choice of institution. Research in Australia suggests that international students seek "on-the-ground research and information building" by making campus visits (Hare, 2012). Some international students consider the anticipated job opportunities that a degree from a particular institution can generate (Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986). Of course, being accepted by the institution, especially when not being offered admission elsewhere, can impact a student's decision (Leong & Sedlacek, 1982; Neice & Braun, 1977).

Paid Agents

In some countries, third-party education agents can play a significant role in the college choice process (Choudaha, et al., 2012; Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011). Third-party

agents, who work neither for high schools overseas nor for U.S. colleges and universities, provide a variety of fee-driven services related to compiling application materials, writing essays, preparing for admissions interviews, and selecting an institution (Choudaha, et al., 2012; Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011). A recent report indicated that nearly 17% of international students surveyed had used education agents at some point during the admissions process, and students who are “most interested in the personal and experiential aspects of studying the United States,” in contrast to academic aspects, are more likely to work with paid agents (Choudaha, et al., 2012, p. 7). The practice is substantially more common in China (Melcher, 2010; Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011).

Trustworthy agents may provide students with valuable guidance and instruction. Some international students have reported negative experiences with education agents, including incidents of agents “trying to steer the applicant away from schools that had more complex admissions requirements, charging exorbitant fees but providing little more than advice, or pushing schools that the applicant was not happy with” (Choudaha, et al., 2012, p. 12).

International students in American higher education represent a central aspect of internationalization. There is an abundance of research on college choice, generally, which informs our understanding of international students and college choice, but additional research that explores how international students in American higher education, specifically, engage in college choice is needed. Furthermore, the relatively few studies on international students and college choice have focused on the factors that influenced international students’ own college choice decisions without examining international students’ perspectives on the college choice process after matriculation.

Research on the factors that influence the college choice decisions of international students is limited, and studies that allow current international students to reflect on how to improve the college choice process are absent.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework that guides this study (Figure 2.4) flows from the literature review in the previous section. Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three stage model of college choice forms the foundation of this framework, while the push-pull forces specific to students who pursue higher education abroad (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002) influence students throughout the three stages. Hand symbols on the left indicate "push" factors from within one's home country, and hand symbols on the right indicate "pull" factors" from within the host country. The factors that influence the college choice process, according to previous research, are listed according to the stage of college choice that they impact and are grouped according to category (*Student, Institutional, and Environmental*).



Factors:

<i>Student</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Socioeconomic status ☞ Academic achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Socioeconomic status ☞ Academic achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Socioeconomic status ☞ Academic achievement
<i>Institutional</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ H.S. classes ☞ H.S. teachers ☞ H.S. counselors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ H.S. counselors --- Promotional materials ☞ Academic reputation ☞ Programs offered ☞ Costs ☞ Financial aid availability ☞ Location ☞ Campus life/ atmosphere ☞ Perceived level of crime/ racial discrimination ☞ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ H.S. counselors ☞ Achievement of H.S. ☞ College preparation components at H.S. --- Academic reputation ☞ Costs ☞ Financial aid availability ☞ Location ☞ Campus life/ atmosphere ☞ Programs/classes offered ☞ Perceived fit ☞ Class size ☞ Demographic profile ☞ Religious affiliation ☞ Athletics ☞ Student support services ☞ Campus visit ☞ --- ☞ Expected job opportunities ☞ ☞ H.S. connections w/ universities ☞
<i>Environmental</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Parental involvement ☞ Family educational attainment ☞ Peers' aspirations ☞ Political oppression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Parents' opinions ☞ Friends' opinions ☞ Peers' opinions --- ☞ Current college students' opinions ☞ ☞ College graduates' opinions ☞ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Parents' opinions ☞ Friends' opinions ☞ Peers' opinions ☞ Third-party agents' opinions --- ☞ Current college students' opinions ☞ ☞ College graduates' opinions ☞

Figure 2.4: Conceptual Framework: International student college choice

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study examines how international undergraduate students in American higher education selected the college or university they attend and how their experience in American higher education influences the factors that they consider important for prospective international students engaged in the college choice process. This study also assesses whether there are differences between (1) which factors influenced the college choice decisions of international undergraduate students in U.S. higher education and (2) which factors those same students think are important for prospective international undergraduate students to consider when making college choice decisions.

Research Questions

1. What factors influenced the college choice decisions of undergraduate international students in American higher education?
2. What factors do undergraduate international students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions?
3. Does the degree of importance ascribed to these factors vary according to key demographic variables?
4. Does the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ1 differ from the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ2?

Data Collection

The research design for this project is non-experimental and quantitative. This study used an online survey instrument that the author developed (Appendix 1). Closed ended

survey questions assessed (1) the degree to which the following factors influenced the college choice decisions of current undergraduate international students in American higher education, and (2) the degree to which current international students in American higher education think the following factors are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions:

1. High school counselors' opinions (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Paulsen, 1990; Plank & Jordan, 2001)
2. Parents' opinions (Bergeson, 2009, Galotti & Mark 1994; Hossler et al., 1999, Paulsen, 1990)
3. Friends'/Peers' Opinions (Choudaha, et al., 2012; Leong & Sedlacek, 1982; McDonough, 1997; Paulsen, 1990)
4. Current undergraduate students' opinions (Paulsen, 1990)
5. Recent university graduates' opinions (Paulsen, 1990)
6. Academic reputation, as determined by rankings (Avery & Hoxby, 2004; Braxton, 1990; Choudaha, et al., 2012)
7. Academic reputation, as determined by other means (Leong & Sedlacek, 1982; Neice & Braun, 1977)
8. Promotional materials from institutions (Bergeson, 2009)
9. Academic programs/majors offered (DesJardins et al.; Hossler et al., 1999; McDonough, 1997)
10. Tuition and fees (Hossler et al., 1999; McDonough, 1997)
11. Availability of financial aid (Braxton, 1990; Paulsen, 1990; Reay et al., 2001)
12. Location (Bodycott, 2009; Braxton, 1990; Leong & Sedlacek, 1982; McDonough, 1997; Paulsen, 1990)
13. Campus life: social atmosphere and opportunities (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Capraro et al., 2004)
14. Perceived level of crime and racial discrimination (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002)
15. Campus visit (Hare, 2012)
16. Size of classes (Paige & McClintock, 1984; Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986)
17. Diversity of student body (Lee, 2008; Paige & McClintock, 1984)
18. Percentage of international students (Lee, 2008; Paige & McClintock, 1984)
19. Religious affiliation of institution Paige & McClintock, 1984)
20. Athletic teams (Letwasky et al., 2003; Paige & McClintock, 1984)
21. Availability of student support services (Bodycott, 2009; Choudaha, et al., 2012)
22. Anticipated job opportunities with degree from institution (Hossler et al., 1999)
23. Perceived fit with institution (Bergeson 2009, Reay et al., 2001)

Each of these factors appears in the conceptual framework as institutional and environmental factors that the literature suggests may influence the college choice process during the search and choice stages. The survey instrument used Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*not important*) to 5 (*very important*) to gauge factors' importance.

The survey instrument also included a series of demographic questions to establish the demographic composition of respondents and to establish some measure of how closely the sample resembles the population of undergraduate international students in American higher education. World Education Service's most recent report entitled "Not All International Students Are the Same: Understanding Segments, Mapping Behavior," highlights a salient characteristic of prospective international students: differences among them abound and these differences impact both how they engage in the college choice process and their college choice decisions (Choudaha, et al., 2012). The degree of importance that current international students ascribe to the factors above may also vary according to these differences. The survey instrument included the following demographic questions:

1. What is your home country?
2. How many years have you been enrolled at your current institution?
3. How many other colleges or universities in the U.S. have you attended?
4. When do you expect to graduate from your current degree program?
5. What is your major area of study?
6. Did you attend middle school or high school in the U.S.?
7. Did your parents attend a university in the U.S.?
8. How satisfied are you with your current institution?
9. Do you feel like you made the right college choice decision?
10. Did you use paid counselors when you were applying to universities?

The survey instrument included two open ended questions that asked respondents to specify any other factors (1) that influenced their college choice decisions and (2) that respondents think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions. The aforementioned list of 23 factors is rooted in the college choice literature, which focuses on how students decide whether and where to attend higher education (Bergerson, 2009). Since this study explores current international students' viewpoints on the college choice process of

prospective students, the survey instrument provided an opportunity for respondents to offer additional factors that do not generally appear in the college choice literature.

In January of 2013, the researcher administered a pre-test pilot of the online survey to a small group of international students at a single institution to evaluate the intelligibility and competency of the instrument. Also in the winter of 2013, members of the researcher's doctoral committee reviewed the survey instrument for face validity, and the Institutional Review Board granted approval to conduct the study. In the spring of 2013, the researcher sought participation from an array of institution types - research universities and liberal arts colleges, publicly and privately supported, in urban and rural environments - in an effort to ensure diversity of participants. The researcher requested that the international student offices at institutions distribute a link to the online survey instrument to all undergraduate international students at their institutions. The researcher employed convenience sampling, relying on institutions that were willing to distribute the survey to their undergraduate international students.

Institutional resistance to the researcher's requests for survey distribution limited participation in this study. Many institutions did not respond to the researcher's requests; several cited institutional policies that prohibit the distribution of research surveys from outside entities (researchers unaffiliated with the home institution), and others cited survey fatigue among their student populations as the reason to deny the researcher's requests.

Sample

Participants in this study were international undergraduate students at selective colleges and universities in the U.S. in the spring of 2013. A total of 134 international

undergraduate students enrolled at nine institutions completed the survey instrument.

Participants were enrolled at the following institution-types:

- one publicly supported research university in the Midwest with more than 2,000 international undergraduate students (51 participants)
- one publicly supported research university in the Mid-Atlantic with more than 1,000 international undergraduate students (43 participants)
- one publicly supported research university in the South with more than 1,000 international undergraduate students (25 participants)
- one privately supported research university in the Northeast with fewer than 500 international undergraduate students (5 participants)
- one privately supported liberal arts college in the Midwest with fewer than 500 international undergraduate students (3 participants)
- one publicly supported master's university in the Mid-Atlantic with fewer than 500 international undergraduate students (3 participants)
- one publicly supported research university in the Northwest with more than 2,000 international undergraduate students (2 participants)
- one privately supported research university in the South with fewer than 500 international undergraduate students (1 participant)
- one privately supported research university in the Mid-Atlantic with fewer than 500 international undergraduate students (1 participant)

Demographic Data

The 134 survey respondents came from 31 different home countries (Table 3.1).

Nearly half of the respondents (65) were from China. India, Korea, and Singapore were

the next most represented countries in the sample with six respondents from each. No more than four respondents came from any of the remaining 27 home countries. Eight respondents did not provide their home countries. More undergraduate international students in American higher education come from China than from any other sending country (IIE, 2012), and the demographics of the sample are consistent with that fact.

Table 3.1
Home Countries of Respondents

Home Country	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents	% of Undergrad. Intl. Student Pop. in U.S.*
China	65	48.5%	26%
Blank (No response given)	8	6%	NA
India	6	4.5%	4.2%
Korea	6	4.5%	12.4%
Singapore	6	4.5%	.7%
Malaysia	4	3%	1.5%
Saudi Arabia	4	3%	4.6%
Columbia	3	2.2%	.8%
Dominican Republic	3	2.2%	.3%
Barbados	2	1.5%	.05%
Brazil	2	1.5%	1.4%
Canada	2	1.5%	4.6%
Guatemala	2	1.5%	.2%
Italy	2	1.5%	.4%
New Zealand	2	1.5%	.2%
Angola	1	.75%	.2%
Australia	1	.75%	.5%
Bermuda	1	.75%	.1%
Czech Republic	1	.75%	.1%
Ecuador	1	.75%	.4%
Ireland	1	.75%	.1%
Mexico	1	.75%	2.4%
Nigeria	1	.75%	1.2%
Norway	1	.75%	.4%
Pakistan	1	.75%	.6%
Paraguay	1	.75%	.1%
Switzerland	1	.75%	.2%
Thailand	1	.75%	.8%
The Bahamas	1	.75%	.4%
The Philippines	1	.75%	.5%
The United Arab Emirates	1	.75%	.5%
The United Kingdom	1	.75%	1.4%

*Source: IIE, 2012

Table 3.2 offers a summary profile of the respondents' demographics. 41 respondents (30.6%) studied business or business-related fields of study. 23 respondents (17.2%) pursued degrees in the Social Sciences, 20 respondents (14.9%) studied Humanities, 18 respondents (13.4%) pursued Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and 13 respondents (9.7%) studied Engineering. 22 respondents (16.4%) did not indicate their major field of study or intended field of study.

44 respondents (32.8%) expected to graduate during the 2015-2016 academic year, 41 respondents (30.6%) expected to graduate in 2014-2015, 25 respondents (18.7%) expected to graduate in 2012-2013, and 17 respondents (12.7%) expected to graduate in 2013-2014. Seven respondents (5.2%) did not indicate an expected year of graduation.

More than three-quarters of respondents (105) did not attend high school in the U.S., and 85% of respondents (114) indicated that their parents did not attend a college or university in the U.S. About one-third of respondents (45) indicated that they had used paid educational agents or counselors when applying to universities. More than 80% of respondents (108) felt that they had selected the right institution to attend, while 20 respondents (14.9%) felt that they had selected the wrong institution.

Table 3.2
Demographics of Respondents

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Major Areas of Study		
Blank or Undecided	22	16.4%
Business	41	30.6%
Engineering	13	9.7%
Humanities	20	14.9%
Natural Sciences and Mathematics	18	13.4%
Social Sciences	23	17.2%
Expected Year of Graduation		
2012-2013	25	18.7%
2013-2014	17	12.7%
2014-2015	41	30.6%
2015-2016	44	32.8%
Blank (No response given)	7	5.2%
Attended Middle or High School in U.S.		
Yes	22	16.4%
No	105	78.4%
Blank (No response given)	7	5.2%
Parents Attended U.S. College/University		
Yes	15	11.2%
No	114	85.1%
Blank (No response given)	5	3.7%
Used Paid Educational Agents or Counselors		
Yes	45	33.6%
No	83	61.9%
Blank (No response given)	5	3.7%
Made Right College Choice Decision		
Yes	108	80.6%
No	20	14.9%
Blank (No response given)	6	4.5%

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis extracted frequencies, means, and standard deviations to address research questions one and two. Independent t-tests were used to determine any statistically significant differences in the degree of importance ascribed to factors based on selected demographic variables, including home country, anticipated year of graduation, satisfaction with college choice decision, and whether respondents attended high school in the U.S. (research question three). Levene's test for equality of variances was used to test for homogeneity of variance. To measure the effect size of any

significant differences between means, Cohen's *d* was calculated. Principal Component Analyses (PCA) with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation of the 23 factors relating to both respondents' own college choice decisions and to what respondents think prospective undergraduate international students should consider in their college choice decisions were performed to reveal underlying concepts that explain any co-variation among the 23 factors. Paired samples *t*-tests were used to compare the mean responses for each factor to test the significance of any difference between a factor's importance in participants' own college choice decisions and the same factor's importance if advising prospective international students (research question four). The statistical significance level for this study was 95% ($p \leq .05$). The researcher employed content coding based on conceptual similarity to code respondents' open-ended responses and employed frequency analysis to present the distribution of responses.

Limitations and Assumptions of Study

Among the primary limitations of this study are those due to non-probability, convenience sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. This study's participants are enrolled at selective institutions of higher education in certain geographical locations; students from the full range of institutions-types and geographical location in American higher education are not included. In addition, the sample may not be representative of the population of undergraduate international students due to the relatively small sample size. Another limitation is that international students who enrolled in U.S. higher education and subsequently dropped out or transferred to institutions outside of the U.S. are not included. Students outside of the U.S. who applied

to U.S. institutions and decided not to matriculate into American higher education are also not included.

Additional limitations of this study derive from the assumptions inherent in the t-test. As Snijders (2001) writes:

The probability statements that are required for statistical tests do not come for free, but are based on certain assumptions about the observations used for the test. In the two-sample t-test, the assumptions are that the observations of different individuals are outcomes of statistically independent, normally distributed, random variables, with the same expected value for all individuals within the same group, and the same variance for all individuals in both groups. Such assumptions are not automatically satisfied, and for some assumptions it may be doubted whether they are ever satisfied exactly.

(p. 7124)

To the extent that convenience sampling necessarily carries with it the risk of selection bias, it is possible that any statistically significant differences between means as determined by t-tests may be the result of confounding variables other than the factors being tested.

The study assumes that recommendations from current international students in American higher education are of value to prospective international students who aspire to American higher education. It also assumes that participants' responses are sincere.

Summary

This study assesses the factors that influence the college choice decisions of prospective international students through the viewpoints of current international students in American higher education. Through the distribution of a survey instrument to 134 international undergraduate students enrolled at nine selective institutions and subsequent analysis of results, the researcher aims to harness the perspectives of current international

students in American higher education to contribute to knowledge about college choice and to help students who aspire to American higher education and their families navigate and clarify the complex process of college choice.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to learn more about how international undergraduate students in American higher education selected the college or university they attend and to explore how their experience in American higher education influences the factors that they consider important for prospective international students engaged in the college choice process. This study also examines the factors that current international undergraduate students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions. This study assesses the extent to which the degree of importance ascribed to these factors varies according to key demographic variables and whether there are differences between (1) which factors influenced the college choice decisions of international undergraduate students in U.S. higher education and (2) which factors those same students think are important for prospective international undergraduate students to consider when making college choice decisions.

Research Questions

1. What factors influenced the college choice decisions of undergraduate international students in American higher education?
2. What factors do undergraduate international students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions?

3. Does the degree of importance ascribed to these factors vary according to key demographic variables?
4. Does the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ1 differ from the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ2?

Response Rate

The researcher did not send the online survey instrument directly to respondents; instead, the researcher requested that the international student offices at more than 100 institutions distribute a link to the online survey instrument to undergraduate international students at their institutions. The institutions that agreed to distribute the survey employed different methods of distribution. Some institutions sent a link to the survey via e-mail to their undergraduate international student populations, others distributed a link to the survey via e-mail to a random sample of their undergraduate international student populations, and others posted a link to the survey on their offices' web pages, blogs, or Facebook pages.

Among the institutions whose undergraduate international students participated in the study, 455 students viewed the survey instrument, 275 students (60.4%) started the survey and 134 (29.5%) completed the survey (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1
Responses by Institution

Institution	Viewed	Started	Completed
Public research university in the Midwest	175	105	51
Public research university in the Mid-Atlantic	125	77	43
Public research university in the South	65	47	25
Private research university in the Northeast	30	20	5
Private liberal arts college in the Midwest	6	4	3
Public master's university in the Mid-Atlantic	9	5	3
Public research university in the Northwest	28	2	2
Private research university in the South	9	9	1
Private research university in the Mid-Atlantic	8	6	1
Total	455	275	134

Findings

Research Question One: What factors influenced the college choice decisions of undergraduate international students in American higher education?

Descriptive statistics were used to address the first research question. The mean response (N=134) for each college choice factor in the survey instrument appears in Table 4.2. The survey instrument used Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*not important*) to 5 (*very important*) to gauge factors' importance. The factors are listed in Table 4.2 by mean values in descending order. The factors that respondents indicated were more important in their own college choice decisions appear at the top of the table.

Table 4.2
Importance of Factors in Respondents' College Choice Decisions

Rank	Factor	Mean
1	Academic Reputation of Institutions - rankings	4.16
2	Academic Programs/Majors Offered	4.08
3	Academic Reputation of Institutions - other means	3.95
4	Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.67
5	Campus Life at Institutions	3.62
6	Perceived Fit with Institutions	3.51
7	Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.5
8	Location of Institutions	3.49
9	Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.46
10	College/University Students' Opinions	3.4
11	Parents' Opinions	3.37
12	Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.36
13	Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.31
14	Availability of International Student Support Services	3.23
15	Availability of Financial Aid	3.08
16	Diversity of Student Body	3.06
17	Percentage of International Students	2.99
18	Size of Classes	2.98
19	Friends/Peers' Opinions	2.95
20	Campus Visit	2.77
21	High School Counselors' Opinions	2.76
22	Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.45
23	Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.34

The mean values of responses for all push factors, pull factors, and factors that both push and pull appear in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
Mean Value of Factors in Respondents' College Choice Decisions, Grouped by Factor Type (Push, Pull, or Push & Pull)

Factor Type	Mean
Factors that Push and Pull	3.51
Pull Factors	3.32
Push Factors	3.03

The survey instrument asked respondents to specify any other factors, beyond those listed in the survey instrument, which influenced their college choice decisions. Responses to this open ended question appear in a Table 4.4 in descending order of frequency.

Table 4.4

Frequency Table of Other Factors that Influenced Respondents' College Choice Decisions

Other Factor	Frequency
Campus Quality (Housing, Dining, Appearance)	4
Scholarship Provided by Institution	3
Travel Accessibility of Institution	2
Climate/Weather of Area	2
Gained Admission to Institution	1
Local Community around Institution	1
Quality of New Student Orientation Program	1
Quality of Faculty	1

Research Question Two: What factors do undergraduate international students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions?

Descriptive statistics were used to address the second research question. The mean response (N=134) for each factor that appears in the survey instrument appears in Table 4.5. The survey instrument used Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*not important*) to 5 (*very important*) to gauge which factors undergraduate international students think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions. The factors are listed in Table 4.5 by mean values in descending order. The factors that respondents indicated were more important for prospective international students to consider appear at the top of the table. For the basis of comparison, the column on the far right displays each factor's rank in respondents' college choice decisions from Table 4.2.

Table 4.5

Factors for Prospective Undergraduate International Students to Consider When Making College Choice Decisions

Rank	Factor	Mean	Factor's Rank in Respondents' College Choice Decisions
1	Academic Programs/Majors Offered ☹	4.23	2
2	☹ Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree ☹	3.96	4
3	Academic Reputation of Institutions - rankings ☹	3.87	1
4	Campus Life at Institutions ☹	3.87	5
5	Academic Reputation of Institutions - other means ☹	3.81	3
6	Perceived Fit with Institutions ☹	3.78	6
7	☹ Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions ☹	3.78	9
8	Tuition and Fees at Institutions ☹	3.74	7
9	Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination ☹	3.67	12
10	Location of Institutions ☹	3.66	8
11	Availability of International Student Support Services ☹	3.65	14
12	☹ College/University Students' Opinions ☹	3.55	10
13	Availability of Financial Aid ☹	3.54	15
14	Campus Visit ☹	3.4	20
15	Diversity of Student Body ☹	3.37	16
16	Size of Classes ☹	3.36	18
17	Percentage of International Students ☹	3.25	17
18	☹ Parents' Opinions	3.22	11
19	Promotional Materials from Institutions ☹	3.17	13
20	☹ High School Counselors' Opinions	2.89	21
21	☹ Friends'/Peers' Opinions	2.87	19
22	Athletic Teams at Institutions ☹	2.58	22
23	Religious Affiliation of Institutions ☹	2.48	23

The mean values of responses for all push factors, pull factors, and factors that both push and pull appear in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Mean Value of Factors for Prospective Undergraduate International Students to Consider When Making College Choice Decisions, Grouped by Factor Type

Factor Type	Mean
☹ Factors that Push and Pull ☹	3.76
Pull Factors ☹	3.49
☹ Push Factors	2.99

The survey instrument asked respondents to specify any other factors, beyond those listed in the survey instrument, which they think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions. Responses to this open ended question appear in a Table 4.7 in descending order of frequency.

Table 4.7
Frequency Table of Other Factors for Prospective Undergraduate International Students to Consider When Making College Choice Decisions

Other Factor	Frequency
Size of City around Institution	3
Availability of Student Resources: LGBTQ, Sexual Assault, Health Services	2
Fit with Students at Institution	2
Institutional Commitment to Internationalization	2
Travel Accessibility of Institution	1
Climate/Weather of Area	1
Housing	1
Friendship with an Upperclassman at Institution for Mentorship	1

Research Question Three: Does the degree of importance ascribed to these factors vary according to key demographic variables?

Home Country

Nearly half of the respondents indicated that their home country is China. Independent t-tests were used to determine whether there are any differences in responses between respondents from China and respondents who are not from China. Respondents who did not indicate a home country were excluded from these analyses.

Table 4.8 summarizes independent t-test results for the importance of factors in Chinese and non-Chinese respondents' college choice decisions. When comparing group responses, respondents from China (M=2.59) considered the religious affiliation of institutions significantly more important in their college choice decisions than

respondents who were not from China ($M = 2.0$), $t(122) = 2.699$, $p = .008$. Cohen's d (.48) indicated a medium effect size. No other differences were significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.8
Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors in Chinese and Non-Chinese Respondents' College Choice Decisions

Factor	Respondents from China		Respondents Not from China		t	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	3.56	1.118	3.19	1.203	1.764	.080
High School Counselors' Opinions	2.95	1.151	2.6	1.336	1.584 [†]	.116
Friends/Peers' Opinions	3.07	1.069	2.84	1.11	1.145	.255
College/University Students' Opinions	3.39	.998	3.43	1.088	-0.222	.825
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.45	1.019	3.48	1.264	-0.156	.876
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	4.016	.889	4.30	.891	-1.801	.074
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	3.78	1.023	4.11	.918	-1.925	.057
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.43	.957	3.19	1.281	1.164 [†]	.247
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	3.95	.913	4.24	1.011	-1.661	.099
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.61	.964	3.41	1.253	1.002 [†]	.318
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	3.28	1.127	2.87	1.497	1.708 [†]	.090
Location of Institutions	3.33	.908	3.66	1.175	-1.678 [†]	.096
Campus Life at Institutions	3.5	.954	3.76	1.146	-1.473	.143
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.53	1.067	3.21	1.334	1.510 [†]	.134
Campus Visit	2.92	1.115	2.65	1.472	1.142 [†]	.256
Size of Classes at Institutions	3.07	1.006	2.9	1.289	.777 [†]	.439
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	3.15	.946	2.95	1.237	.985	.327
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	3.15	1.114	2.81	1.291	1.564	.120
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.59	1.243	2.0	1.191	2.699	.008*
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.52	1.242	2.37	1.36	.645	.520
Availability of International Student Support Services	3.39	1.021	3.05	1.313	1.634	.105
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.75	.975	3.57	1.411	.798 [†]	.427
Perceived Fit w/Institutions	3.41	.901	3.62	1.275	-1.057 [†]	.293

* denotes significant difference at .05.

[†] denotes hypothesis of equal variances was rejected by Levene's test for equality of variances.

Table 4.9 summarizes independent t-test results for the importance of factors that respondents from China and from all other countries think prospective undergraduate international students should consider when making college choice decisions. When comparing group responses, respondents from China ($M = 3.48$) rated parents' opinions significantly more important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider than respondents who were not from China ($M = 2.98$), $t(116) = 2.257$, $p = .026$. Cohen's d (.42) indicated a medium effect size. Respondents from China ($M = 2.75$) also rated the religious affiliation of institutions significantly more important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider than respondents who were not from China ($M = 2.18$), $t(118) = 2.641$, $p = .009$. Cohen's d (.49) indicated a medium effect size.

Chinese respondents rated the following five factors significantly less important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider than respondents who were not from China:

- Academic Programs/Majors at Institutions
- Location on Institutions
- Campus Life at Institutions
- Size of Classes
- Perceived Fit with Institutions

No other differences were significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.9

Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors that Chinese and Non-Chinese Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider

Factor	Respondents from China		Respondents Not from China		t	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	3.48	1.232	2.98	1.172	2.257	.026*
High School Counselors' Opinions	3.04	1.068	2.8	1.273	1.084 [†]	.281
Friends/Peers' Opinions	2.97	.909	2.75	1.15	1.122 [†]	.264
College/University Students' Opinions	3.45	.928	3.72	1.019	-1.531	.129
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.63	.981	3.97	.966	-1.914	.058
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	3.78	1.018	3.97	.966	-1.036	.302
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	3.75	1.044	3.89	.819	-0.813 [†]	.418
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.24	1.088	3.05	1.217	.892	.374
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	4.09	.8	4.39	.802	-2.032	.045*
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.68	.973	3.79	1.002	-0.604	.547
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	3.5	.996	3.54	1.163	-0.206	.837
Location of Institutions	3.22	.852	4.08	.996	-5.073	<.001*
Campus Life at Institutions	3.66	.801	4.02	.991	-2.155	.033*
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.64	.943	3.7	1.078	-0.301	.764
Campus Visit	3.32	.909	3.48	1.246	-0.798 [†]	.426
Size of Classes at Institutions	3.11	.888	3.55	1.185	-2.287 [†]	.024*
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	3.17	.968	3.53	1.105	-1.875 [†]	.063
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	3.24	1.144	3.21	1.24	.129	.898
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.75	1.108	2.18	1.232	2.641	.009*
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.62	1.105	2.51	1.247	.52	.604
Availability of International Student Support Services	3.55	1.016	3.72	1.121	-0.853	.395
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.87	1.096	4.05	1.096	-0.916	.361
Perceived Fit w/Institutions	3.55	.946	4.02	1.081	-2.516	.013*

* denotes significant difference at .05.

[†] denotes hypothesis of equal variances was rejected by Levene's test for equality of variances.

Anticipated Year of Graduation

Independent t-tests were used to determine whether there are any differences in responses between respondents who were upperclassmen (whose expected year of graduation was 2012-2013 or 2013-2014) and respondents who were underclassmen (whose expected year of graduation was 2014-2015 or 2015-2016). Respondents who did not indicate an expected year of graduation were excluded from these analyses.

Table 4.10 summarizes independent t-test results for the importance of factors in respondents' college choice decisions grouped by expected year of graduation. When comparing group responses, upperclassmen ($M = 3.26$) considered friends'/peers' opinions significantly more important in their college choice decisions than respondents who were underclassmen ($M = 2.81$), $t(124) = 2.229$, $p = .028$. Cohen's d (.42) indicated a medium effect size. Upperclassmen ($M = 4.5$) also considered academic reputation of institutions, as determined by rankings, significantly more important in their college choice decisions than respondents who were underclassmen ($M = 3.98$), $t(125) = 3.16$, $p = .002$. Cohen's d (.6) indicated a medium effect size.

Upperclassmen ($M = 2.79$) considered diversity of the student body at institutions significantly less important in their college choice decisions than respondents who were underclassmen ($M = 3.19$), $t(123) = -2.001$, $p = .048$. Cohen's d (.38) indicated a medium effect size. Upperclassmen ($M = 2.33$) considered a campus visit significantly less important in their college choice decisions than respondents who were underclassmen ($M = 2.99$), $t(123) = -2.726$, $p = .007$. Cohen's d (.52) indicated a medium effect size. Upperclassmen ($M = 2.02$) considered religious affiliation significantly less important in their college choice decisions than respondents who were underclassmen ($M = 2.46$),

$t(123) = -1.982, p = .05$. Cohen's d (.52) indicated a medium effect size. Upperclassmen ($M = 2.1$) also considered athletic teams at institutions significantly less important in their college choice decisions than respondents who were underclassmen ($M = 2.6$), $t(122) = -2.061, p = .041$. Cohen's d (.39) indicated a medium effect size. No other differences were significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.10

Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors in Respondents' College Choice Decisions Grouped by Expected Year of Graduation

Factor	Upperclassmen (Graduation Expected in 2012-13 or 2013-14)		Underclassmen (Graduation Expected in 2014-15 or 2013-14)		t	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	3.19	1.194	3.48	1.151	-1.328	.187
High School Counselors' Opinions	2.79	1.335	2.77	1.233	.061	.952
Friends/Peers' Opinions	3.26	1.014	2.81	1.103	2.229	.028*
College/University Students' Opinions	3.37	1.067	3.44	1.029	-0.351	.726
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.61	1.159	3.42	1.122	.894	.373
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	4.5	.672	3.98	.963	3.16	.002*
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	4.12	.889	3.84	1.045	1.51	.134
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.26	1.231	3.3	1.112	-0.18	.857
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	4.17	.961	4.0	1.006	.89	.375
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.52	1.292	3.5	1.07	.11	.913
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	3.2	1.418	3.04	1.312	.621	.536
Location of Institutions	3.42	1.095	3.51	1.064	-0.446	.657
Campus Life at Institutions	3.48	0.994	3.64	1.126	-0.813	.418
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.1	1.185	3.42	1.235	-1.447	.150
Campus Visit	2.33	1.183	2.99	1.313	-2.726	.007*
Size of Classes at Institutions	2.71	1.123	3.1	1.158	-1.776	.078
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	2.79	1.071	3.19	1.076	-2.001	.048*
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	2.73	1.184	3.1	1.209	-1.589	.115
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.02	1.07	2.46	1.309	-1.982 [†]	.05*
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.1	1.265	2.6	1.294	-2.061	.041*
Availability of International Student Support Services	3.1	1.226	3.24	1.175	-0.646	.520
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.57	1.291	3.7	1.167	-0.575	.566
Perceived Fit w/Institutions	3.38	1.058	3.57	1.16	-0.868	.387

* denotes significant difference at .05.

[†] denotes hypothesis of equal variances was rejected by Levene's test for equality of variances.

Table 4.11 summarizes independent t-test results for the importance of factors that respondents think prospective undergraduate international students should consider when making college choice decisions, grouped by expected year of graduation. When comparing group responses, upperclassmen ($M = 4.15$) rated the academic reputation of institutions, as determined by rankings, significantly more important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider than underclassmen ($M = 3.71$), $t(119) = 2.366$, $p = .02$. Upperclassmen ($M = 2.18$) rated the athletic teams at institutions significantly less important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider than underclassmen ($M = 2.75$), $t(118) = -2.586$, $p = .011$. Cohen's d (.51) indicated a medium effect size. No other differences were significant at the .05 level. No other differences were significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.11

Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors that Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider, Grouped by Expected Year of Graduation

Factor	Upperclassmen (Graduation Expected in 2012-13 or 2013-14)		Underclassmen (Graduation Expected in 2014-15 or 2013-14)		t	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	2.97	1.246	3.31	1.186	-1.436	.154
High School Counselors' Opinions	2.98	1.25	2.86	1.148	.504	.615
Friends/Peers' Opinions	3.03	1.025	2.77	1.04	1.298	.197
College/University Students' Opinions	3.5	1.086	3.62	.938	-0.64	.524
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.8	1.091	3.8	.928	-0.013	.990
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	4.15	.904	3.71	1.0	2.366	.020*
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	3.92	.839	3.73	.969	1.114 [†]	.268
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.03	1.25	3.19	1.085	-0.726	.469
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	4.26	.91	4.21	.779	.317	.752
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.65	1.099	3.75	.942	-0.535	.593
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	3.54	1.047	3.53	1.108	.036	.971
Location of Institutions	3.75	1.104	3.63	.986	.629	.531
Campus Life at Institutions	3.8	1.018	3.85	.868	-0.292	.771
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.5	1.013	3.71	1.046	-1.06	.291
Campus Visit	3.15	1.159	3.51	1.038	-1.676	.096
Size of Classes at Institutions	3.4	1.128	3.33	1.059	.307	.759
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	3.3	1.091	3.41	1.022	-0.532	.596
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	3.0	1.261	3.38	1.107	-1.67	.098
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.25	1.056	2.58	1.244	-1.442	.152
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.18	1.023	2.75	1.189	-2.586	.011*
Availability of International Student Support Services	3.78	1.121	3.56	1.037	1.066	.288
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.95	1.26	3.98	.987	-0.121	.904
Perceived Fit with Institutions	3.68	1.163	3.84	.993	-0.809	.42

* denotes significant difference at .05.

[†] denotes hypothesis of equal variances was rejected by Levene's test for equality of variances.

Satisfaction with College Choice Decision

Independent t-tests were used to determine whether there are any differences in responses between respondents who indicated that they had made the right college choice decision and respondents who indicated that they had made the wrong college choice decision. Respondents who did not indicate whether they had made the right or wrong college choice decision were excluded from these analyses.

Table 4.12 summarizes independent t-test results for the importance of factors in respondents' college choice decisions grouped by satisfaction with their college choice decision. No differences were significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.12

Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors in Respondents' College Choice Decisions Grouped by Satisfaction with College Choice Decision

Factor	Made the Right College Choice Decision		Did Not Make the Right College Choice Decision		t	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	3.4	1.103	3.3	1.455	.314 [†]	.756
High School Counselors' Opinions	2.78	1.269	2.79	1.228	-0.044	.965
Friends/Peers' Opinions	2.89	1.088	3.26	1.046	-1.39	.167
College/University Students' Opinions	3.42	1.01	3.3	1.218	.474	.636
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.51	1.062	3.3	1.455	.614 [†]	.545
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	4.08	.877	4.45	.999	-1.681	.095
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	3.89	.998	4.15	.988	-1.076	.284
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.24	1.092	3.7	1.261	-1.701	.091
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	4.12	.898	3.8	1.361	1.016 [†]	.321
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.47	1.102	3.65	1.348	-0.656	.513
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	3.09	1.328	3.05	1.432	.135	.893
Location of Institutions	3.48	1.01	3.45	1.356	.1	.920
Campus Life at Institutions	3.6	.998	3.55	1.468	.168 [†]	.868
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.35	1.182	3.25	1.482	.273 [†]	.787
Campus Visit	2.76	1.269	2.9	1.447	-0.429	.668
Size of Classes at Institutions	2.95	1.081	2.95	1.432	.008 [†]	.993
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	3.04	1.095	3.1	1.119	-0.232	.817
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	2.93	1.193	3.2	1.322	-0.931	.354
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.26	1.196	2.5	1.469	-0.81	.419
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.49	1.309	2.15	1.226	1.061	.291
Availability of International Student Support Services	3.18	1.186	3.35	1.268	-0.584	.560
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.64	1.173	3.65	1.424	-0.019	.985
Perceived Fit w/ Institutions	3.56	1.105	3.2	1.196	1.307	.194

[†] denotes hypothesis of equal variances was rejected by Levene's test for equality of variances.

Table 4.13 summarizes independent t-test results for the importance of factors that respondents think prospective undergraduate international students should consider when

making college choice decisions, grouped by respondents' satisfaction with their college choice decision. No differences were significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.13
Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors that Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider, Grouped by Satisfaction of College Choice Decision

Factor	Made the Right College Choice Decision		Did Not Make the Right College Choice Decision		t	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	3.26	1.191	3.0	1.372	.818	.415
High School Counselors' Opinions	2.9	1.185	2.9	1.15	.018	.986
Friends/Peers' Opinions	2.83	1.024	3.05	1.079	-0.882	.379
College/University Students' Opinions	3.6	.95	3.42	1.17	.712	.478
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.83	.923	3.68	1.204	.582	.562
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	3.78	.959	4.0	.745	-0.961	.338
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	3.84	.981	4.0	1.054	-0.666	.507
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.09	1.104	3.47	1.349	-1.353	.179
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	4.25	.774	4.16	1.068	.457	.648
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.69	.96	3.9	1.197	-0.823	.412
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	3.45	1.077	3.79	1.084	-1.256	.212.
Location of Institutions	3.61	1.026	3.84	1.068	-0.908	.366
Campus Life at Institutions	3.88	.855	3.58	1.17	1.083 [†]	.291
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.67	.998	3.68	1.204	-0.068	.946
Campus Visit	3.4	1.03	3.42	1.346	-0.092	.927
Size of Classes at Institutions	3.34	1.022	3.26	1.284	.3	.764
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	3.3	1.037	3.6	1.17	-1.052	.295
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	3.18	1.129	3.42	1.387	-0.835	.405
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.42	1.125	2.63	1.499	-0.593 [†]	.559
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.61	1.179	2.37	1.065	.824	.411
Availability of International Student Support Services	3.63	1.019	3.58	1.305	.196	.845
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	4.0	1.066	3.68	1.204	1.162	.247
Perceived Fit w/ Institutions	3.81	1.03	3.53	1.124	1.072	.286

[†] denotes hypothesis of equal variances was rejected by Levene's test for equality of variances.

Attended High School in the U.S.

Independent t-tests were used to determine whether there are any differences in responses between respondents who indicated that they attended high school in the U.S. and respondents who indicated that they did not attend high school in the U.S. Respondents who did not indicate whether they attended high school in the U.S. were excluded from these analyses.

Table 4.14 summarizes independent t-test results for the importance of factors in respondents' college choice decisions grouped whether respondents attended high school in the U.S. When comparing group responses, respondents who attended high school in the U.S. ($M=3.52$) considered a campus visit significantly more important in their college choice decisions than respondents who did not attend high school in the U.S. ($M = 2.6$), $t(123) = 2.919$, $p = .004$. Cohen's $d (.7)$ indicated a medium effect size. No other differences were significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.14

Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors Respondents' College Choice Decisions Grouped by Whether Attended High School in the U.S.

Factor	Attended		Did Not Attend		t	Prob.
	High School in the U.S.		High School in the U.S.			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	3.36	1.329	3.37	1.129	-0.029	.977
High School Counselors' Opinions	3.18	1.097	2.69	1.268	1.69	.094
Friends/Peers' Opinions	3.24	1.136	2.89	1.077	1.356	.177
College/University Students' Opinions	3.46	.963	3.39	1.065	.245	.807
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.32	1.211	3.51	1.128	-0.696	.488
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	4.3	.767	4.1	.929	.792	.43
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	3.96	.899	3.91	1.02	.172	.864
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.43	1.207	3.26	1.141	.613	.541
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	4.1	.831	4.04	1.018	.241	.81
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.57	.978	3.5	1.17	.279	.78
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	3.05	1.431	3.1	1.333	-0.15	.881
Location of Institutions	3.81	.981	3.4	1.088	1.605	.111
Campus Life at Institutions	3.86	1.153	3.54	1.065	1.217	.226
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.38	1.117	3.34	1.254	.129	.897
Campus Visit	3.52	1.078	2.6	1.292	2.919	.004*
Size of Classes at Institutions	2.91	1.179	2.98	1.149	-0.275	.784
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	3.1	.995	3.04	1.123	.215	.83
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	3.05	1.117	2.94	1.245	.359	.72
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.29	1.384	2.33	1.226	-0.137	.891
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.86	1.315	2.34	1.288	1.672	.097
Availability of International Student Support Services	2.86	1.153	3.28	1.17	-1.511	.133
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.55	1.191	3.65	1.218	-0.339	.735
Perceived Fit w/ Institutions	3.62	1.161	3.47	1.123	.547	.587

* denotes significant difference at .05.

Table 4.15 summarizes independent t-test results for the importance of factors that respondents think prospective undergraduate international students should consider when

making college choice decisions, grouped by whether respondents attended high school in the U.S. No differences were significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.15
Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors that Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider, Grouped by Whether Attended High School in U.S.

Factor	Attended High School in the U.S.		Did Not Attend High School in the U.S.		t	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	3.48	1.123	3.15	1.221	1.115	.267
High School Counselors' Opinions	3.29	1.102	2.81	1.184	1.673	.097
Friends/Peers' Opinions	2.95	1.071	2.84	1.032	.451	.653
College/University Students' Opinions	3.5	.859	3.59	1.016	-0.386	.7
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.71	1.007	3.81	.982	-0.404	.687
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	4	.873	3.82	1.014	.779	.438
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	3.82	.853	3.8	.958	.091	.928
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.29	1.271	3.13	1.125	.564	.574
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	4.32	.671	4.2	.849	.541	.59
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.5	1.03	3.77	.993	-1.026	.307
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	3.19	1.078	3.59	1.088	-1.515	.132
Location of Institutions	3.76	1.044	3.62	1.027	.589	.557
Campus Life at Institutions	4.0	.949	3.8	.91	.909	.365
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.71	.956	3.65	1.062	.27	.788
Campus Visit	3.76	.995	3.31	1.097	1.754	.082
Size of Classes at Institutions	3.35	.988	3.33	1.087	.076	.939
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	3.38	.74	3.34	1.121	.208 [†]	.836
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	3.19	1.078	3.23	1.211	-0.146	.884
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.52	1.289	2.46	1.184	.221	.825
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.91	1.179	2.51	1.155	1.435	.154
Availability of International Student Support Services	3.45	.999	3.67	1.087	-0.85	.397
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.85	1.04	3.96	1.104	-0.412	.681
Perceived Fit w/ Institutions	3.8	1.005	3.76	1.06	.146	.884

[†] denotes hypothesis of equal variances was rejected by Levene's test for equality of variances.

Use of Paid Agents

Independent t-tests were used to determine whether there are any differences in responses between respondents who indicated that they used paid educational agents or counselors when applying to universities and respondents who indicated that they did not use paid educational agents or counselors. Respondents who did not indicate whether they used paid educational agents or counselors were excluded from these analyses.

Table 4.16 summarizes independent t-test results for the importance of factors in respondents' college choice decisions grouped by use of paid agents. No differences were significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.16

Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors in Respondents' College Choice Decisions Grouped by Use of Paid Agents

Factor	Used Paid Agents		Did Not Use Paid Agents		t	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	3.56	1.078	3.31	1.178	1.144	.255
High School Counselors' Opinions	2.93	1.228	2.71	1.262	.961	.338
Friends/Peers' Opinions	2.98	1.097	2.94	1.093	.191	.849
College/University Students' Opinions	3.5	1.089	3.35	1.017	.775	.44
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.38	1.114	3.54	1.119	-0.797	.427
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	4.09	.848	4.18	.939	-0.546	.586
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	3.93	.863	3.92	1.062	.096	.924
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.33	1.022	3.25	1.199	.408	.684
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	4.07	.939	4.05	1.017	.097	.923
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.47	1.102	3.65	1.348	-0.656	.513
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	2.96	1.293	3.17	1.35	-0.869	.386
Location of Institutions	3.48	1.045	3.43	1.083	.225	.822
Campus Life at Institutions	3.64	1.048	3.56	1.101	.416	.678
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.42	1.196	3.28	1.25	.62	.536
Campus Visit	2.8	1.193	2.78	1.352	.062	.951
Size of Classes at Institutions	2.96	1.147	3.0	1.14	-0.209	.835
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	3.22	1.042	2.94	1.122	1.396	.165
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	3.07	1.176	2.89	1.235	.788	.432
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.4	1.176	2.24	1.277	.716	.475
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.58	1.288	2.34	1.312	.99	.324
Availability of International Student Support Services	3.22	1.259	3.17	1.149	.223	.824
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.55	1.21	3.73	1.222	-0.786	.434
Perceived Fit w/ Institutions	3.29	1.16	3.61	1.092	-1.522	.13

Table 4.17 summarizes independent t-test results for the importance of factors that respondents think prospective undergraduate international students should consider when

making college choice decisions, grouped by respondents' use of paid educational agents.

No differences were significant at the .05 level.

Table 4.17
Summary of t-test Results for the Importance of Factors that Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider, Grouped by Use of Paid Agents

Factor	Used Paid Agents		Did Not Use Paid Agents		t	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	3.41	1.245	3.13	1.17	1.223	.224
High School Counselors' Opinions	2.98	.976	2.88	1.262	.470 [†]	.64
Friends/Peers' Opinions	3.02	1.023	2.78	1.015	1.254	.212
College/University Students' Opinions	3.62	.96	3.58	.961	.252	.802
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.71	.978	3.686	.963	-0.846	.399
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	3.89	.92	3.87	1.011	.079	.937
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	3.93	.95	3.76	.9	1.013	.313
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.05	1.099	3.21	1.177	-0.737	.463
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	4.17	.946	4.29	.741	-0.728	.468
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.67	1.022	3.77	.985	-0.531	.596
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	3.43	1.087	3.56	1.094	-0.614	.54
Location of Institutions	3.51	1.121	3.72	.974	-1.096	.275
Campus Life at Institutions	3.78	.974	3.9	.852	-0.702	.484
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.59	1.041	3.71	1.024	-0.634	.528
Campus Visit	3.28	1.076	3.44	1.094	-0.785	.434
Size of Classes at Institutions	3.32	1.116	3.34	1.037	-0.097	.923
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	3.42	1.055	3.29	1.05	.692	.49
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	3.24	1.209	3.22	1.173	.093	.926
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.67	1.128	2.36	1.213	1.366	.175
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.64	1.08	2.49	1.21	.649	.518
Availability of International Student Support Services	3.41	1.187	3.74	.973	-1.682	.095
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.84	1.14	4.05	1.043	-1.034	.303
Perceived Fit w/ Institutions	3.55	1.109	3.9	1.001	-1.793	.075

[†] denotes hypothesis of equal variances was rejected by Levene's test for equality of variances.

Principal Component Analysis

Principal Component Analysis may reveal underlying concepts that explain any co-variation among the 23 factors related to international student college choice that the survey instrument assessed. To explore whether the 23 factors may be summarized or reduced to fewer composite factors, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation of the 23 factors relating to respondents' own college choice decisions was performed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .786 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 1172.15$, $p < .001$), indicating the sample's factorability. The analysis indicated seven underlying factors (Table 4.18).

Table 4.18
Item Loadings for the 23 Factors Relating to Respondents' Own College Choice Decisions^a

Component	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	.795						
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	.785						
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	.712			.318			
Size of Classes at Institutions	.690						
Location of Institutions	.624		.329				
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	.559		-.393		.477		
Availability of International Student Support Services	.501	.309		.493			
Academic Reputation as determined by other means		.858					
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings		.779					
Promotional Materials from Institutions	.300	.442			.434		
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions			.709				
Campus Life at Institutions	.543		.645				
Perceived Fit w/Institutions			.568		.322		
Tuition and Fees at Institutions				.766			
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions				.723			
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	.388	.314	.409	.419			
Athletic Teams at Institutions					.817		
Campus Visit	.374				.651		
College/University Students' Opinions						.850	
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions						.804	
High School Counselors' Opinions							.785
Friends/Peers' Opinions		.309					.680
Parents' Opinions				.422			.596
Eigenvalues	6.721	2.374	1.771	1.472	1.276	1.218	1.1
Percent of Total Variance	29.221	10.321	7.699	6.398	5.547	5.294	4.784
Number of Factors	7	3	3	3	2	2	3

^aLoadings =>.3

Seven items loaded onto Factor 1, including percentage of international students, diversity of student body, perceived level of crime and racial discrimination, size of classes, location, religious affiliation, and availability of international student support services. These items relate generally to what may be labeled Campus Environment.

Three items loaded onto Factor 2, including academic reputation – rankings, academic reputation – other means, and promotional materials. Insofar as promotional materials showcase their respective institutions' academic reputations, these three items relate to what may be labeled as Academic Reputation.

Three items loaded onto Factor 3, including academic programs offered, campus life, and perceived fit. These items relate to what may be labeled Academic and Social Fit.

Three items loaded onto Factor 4, including tuition and fees, availability of financial aid, and anticipated job opportunities. These items relate to what may be labeled Economic Costs and Benefits.

Two items loaded onto Factor 5, including athletic teams and campus visit. These items may be labeled Athletic Teams and Campus Visit.

Two items loaded onto Factor 6, including college students' opinions and recent college graduates' opinions. These items relate to what may be labeled College Student and Recent Graduate Opinions.

Three items loaded onto Factor 7, including counselors' opinions, friends' opinions, and parents' opinions. These items relate to what may be labeled Counselor, Friend, Parent Opinions.

To explore whether the 23 factors may be summarized or reduced to fewer composite factors, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation of the 23 factors relating to what respondents think prospective undergraduate international students should consider in their college choice decisions was performed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .669 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 948.928$, $p < .001$), indicating the sample's factorability. The analysis indicated seven underlying factors (Table 4.19).

Table 4.19

Item Loadings for the 23 Factors Relating to What Respondents Think Prospective Undergraduate International Students Should Consider^a

Component	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Size of Classes at Institutions	.795						
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	.760					.330	
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	.674						
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	.560				.445		
Perceived Fit w/Institutions	.537	.396					-.311
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree		.741					
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination		.623					.387
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions		.586					
Availability of International Student Support Services	.394	.516					
Academic Reputation as determined by other means			.871				
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings			.840				
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions		.420	.488				.374
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions				.888			
College/University Students' Opinions				.855			
Parents' Opinions		.323			.729		
High School Counselors' Opinions					.681		
Friends'/Peers' Opinions				.332	.671		
Athletic Teams at Institutions					.557	.404	
Location of Institutions						.736	
Campus Life at Institutions		.330				.653	
Campus Visit	.398					.610	
Promotional Materials from Institutions							.758
Tuition and Fees at Institutions				.541			.605
Eigenvalues	5.158	2.608	2.082	1.733	1.288	1.236	1.119
Percent of Total Variance	22.427	11.339	9.054	7.534	5.6	5.376	4.865
Number of Factors	5	4	3	2	4	3	2

^aLoadings =>.3

Five items loaded onto Factor 1, including size of classes, diversity of student body, percentage of international students, religious affiliation, and perceived fit. These items relate generally to what may be labeled Fit with Campus Environment.

Four items loaded onto Factor 2, including anticipated job opportunities, perceived level of crime and racial discrimination, availability of financial aid, and availability of international student support services. These items relate to what may be labeled Campus Support and Job Prospects.

Three items loaded onto Factor 3, including academic reputation – other means, academic reputation – rankings, and academic programs offered. These items relate to what may be labeled Academic Reputation and Offerings.

Two items loaded onto Factor 4, including college students' opinions and recent college graduates' opinions. These items relate to what may be labeled College Student and Recent Graduate Opinions.

Four items loaded onto Factor 5, including, parents' opinions, counselors' opinions, friends' opinions, and athletic teams. These items may be labeled Parent, Counselor, Friend Opinions and Athletic Teams.

Three items loaded onto Factor 6, including location, campus life, and campus visit. These items relate to what may be labeled Location and Campus Feel.

Two items loaded onto Factor 7, including promotional materials and tuition and fees. Insofar as promotional materials showcase their respective institutions' tuition and fees, these two items may be labeled as Tuition and Fees.

Research Question Four: Does the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ1 differ from the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ2?

Paired t-tests were used to determine whether there are any differences in (1) the degree of importance that respondents ascribed to factors in their own college choice decisions and (2) the degree of importance that respondents ascribed to factors when advising prospective international students on how they should decide which U.S. college or university to attend. Table 4.20 summarizes the paired t-test results.

When comparing group responses, respondents ascribed significantly more importance to parents' opinions ($M = 3.42$) in their own college choice decisions than when advising prospective international students on how they should make their college choice decisions ($M = 3.22$), $t(124) = 2.396$, $p = .018$. Respondents also ascribed significantly more importance to academic reputation, as determined by rankings, ($M = 4.17$) in their own college choice decisions than when advising prospective international students on how they should make their college choice decisions ($M = 3.87$), $t(124) = 3.969$, $p = <.001$.

Respondents ascribed significantly less importance to the following 15 factors in their own college choice decisions than when advising prospective international students on how they should make their college choice decisions:

- Recent College/University Graduates' Opinions
- Tuition and Fees at Institutions
- Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions
- Location of Institutions
- Campus Life at Institutions: social atmosphere and opportunities
- Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination at Institutions
- Campus Visit
- Size of Classes
- Diversity of Student Body at Institutions
- Percentage of International Students at Institutions

- Religious Affiliation of Institutions
- Athletic Teams at Institutions
- Availability of International Student Support Services at Institutions
- Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree from Institutions
- Perceived Fit with Institutions

Table 4.22

Summary of Paired t-test Results for Importance of Factors in Respondents' Own College Choice Decision and if Advising Prospective Students

Factor	Importance in Respondents' Own College Choice Decision		Importance if Advising Prospective Students		t	Prob.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Parents' Opinions	3.42	1.123	3.22	1.222	2.396	.018*
High School Counselors' Opinions	2.75	1.289	2.87	1.185	-1.43	.155
Friends/Peers' Opinions	2.95	1.102	2.86	1.041	1.214	.227
College/University Students' Opinions	3.41	1.037	3.56	.984	-1.816	.072
Recent College/ University Graduates' Opinions	3.43	1.142	3.76	.974	-3.562	<.001*
Academic Reputation, as determined by rankings	4.17	.889	3.87	.976	3.969	<.001*
Academic Reputation as determined by other means	3.94	.982	3.81	.924	1.662	.099
Promotional Materials from Institutions	3.3	1.145	3.18	1.124	1.531	.128
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	4.07	.989	4.23	.821	-1.931	.056
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	3.5	1.115	3.74	.997	-2.813	.006*
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	3.06	1.312	3.54	1.089	-5.018	<.001*
Location of Institutions	3.46	1.081	3.67	1.022	-2.237	.027*
Campus Life at Institutions	3.62	1.087	3.87	.915	-2.615	.01*
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination	3.37	1.254	3.67	1.038	-3.366	.001*
Campus Visit	2.76	1.303	3.4	1.081	-6.331	<.001*
Size of Classes at Institutions	2.95	1.156	3.36	1.068	-4.802	<.001*
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	3.05	1.121	3.39	1.046	-4.509	<.001*
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	2.97	1.236	3.25	1.194	-3.307	.001*
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	2.33	1.281	2.49	1.202	-2.189	.03*
Athletic Teams at Institutions	2.41	1.317	2.58	1.18	-2.626	.01*
Availability of International Student Support Services	3.23	1.192	3.67	1.038	-4.617	<.001*
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree	3.69	1.202	3.97	1.055	-3.191	.002*
Perceived Fit with Institutions	3.54	1.097	3.78	1.044	-3.068	.003*

* denotes significant difference at .05.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Summary

College choice influences student success in substantial ways (Braxton, Vesper, & Hossler, 1995; Stage & Hossler, 2000; Villella & Hu, 1990), and scholars emphasize the importance of understanding college choice and its “implications for practice, policy, and research” (Bergerson, 2009, p. 1). Prospective international students who aspire to American higher education stand at the confluence of both college choice and internationalization - “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, p. 2, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to learn more about how international undergraduate students in the U.S. made their college choice decisions and to examine the factors that current international undergraduate students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions. This study assessed whether there are differences between (1) which factors influenced the college choice decisions of international undergraduate students in U.S. higher education and (2) which factors those same students think are important for prospective international undergraduate students to consider when making college choice decisions.

The following four research questions guide this study:

1. What factors influenced the college choice decisions of undergraduate international students in American higher education?

2. What factors do undergraduate international students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions?
3. Does the degree of importance ascribed to these factors vary according to key demographic variables?
4. Does the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ1 differ from the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ2?

Three primary theoretical approaches to college choice have emerged: econometric, sociological, and combined process models (Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper, 1999; Kinzie et al., 2004; Paulsen, 1990). This literature suggests that three primary categories of factors influence college choice: *student characteristics*, e.g. socioeconomic status and scholastic aptitude, *institutional characteristics*, e.g. tuition, reputation, and location, and *environmental characteristics*, e.g. parental involvement and peer influence (DesJardins, Dundar, & Darwin, 2006; Paulsen, 1990).

The “Push-Pull” model describes the college choice process of students who pursue higher education abroad (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002). The limited literature on how students who seek higher education outside of their home country engage in college choice suggests that a variety of factors play a role in the decision to pursue education abroad, in selecting the host country, and in choosing the institution to attend (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002).

Hossler and Gallagher’s (1987) three stage model of college choice (predisposition, search, and choice) forms the foundation of this study’s conceptual framework, while the

push-pull forces specific to students who pursue higher education abroad (Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002) influence students throughout the three stages.

This study used an online survey instrument that the author developed (Appendix 1) to assess the degree to which certain factors influenced the college choice decisions of current undergraduate international students in American higher education, and the degree to which current international students in American higher education think those factors are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions. Two open ended questions asked respondents to specify any other factors (1) that influenced their college choice decisions and (2) that respondents think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions. The survey instrument also included several demographic questions.

A total of 134 international undergraduate students enrolled at nine selective institutions in the U.S. completed the survey instrument. All respondents experienced the college choice process. Similarly, with regard to Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) first phase of college choice, respondents' enrollment in higher education suggests a predisposition to attend higher education. This study focuses on Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) second and third phases of college choice, search and choice, with an emphasis on exploring the factors related to choice.

Summary of Findings

Research Question One: What factors influenced the college choice decisions of undergraduate international students in American higher education?

Respondents' Own College Choice Decisions:

The five college choice factors that ranked most highly in respondents' own college choice decisions were academic reputation-rankings, academic programs/majors offered, academic reputation-other means, anticipated job opportunities, and campus life (Table 4.2). The five factors that ranked lowest in respondents' college choice decisions were friends'/peers' opinions, campus visits, high school counselors' opinions, athletic teams, and the religious affiliation of institutions (Table 4.2). Of the ten most highly ranked factors, seven were pull factors and three were push-and-pull factors. The most highly rated push factor was "parents' opinions," which was the eleventh most highly rated factor (Table 4.2).

Few respondents offered other factors that influenced their college choice decisions. The only other factors that were offered by multiple respondents were campus quality, scholarship provided by institutions, travel accessibility, and the climate/weather of area (Table 4.4).

These findings are largely consistent with previous research on college choice, generally (Bergeson, 2009; Paulsen, 1990), and on college choice for international students, specifically (Choudaha, et al., 2012; Mazzaroul & Soutar, 2002). The factors that appear in the college choice literature were the relevant factors, to varying degrees, in the respondents' college choice decisions. The most important factors in respondents' college choice decisions relate to academic reputation, program offerings, and job

opportunities, which are in accordance with frequently cited factors for international students with high academic preparedness and aspirations to attend selective institutions (Choudaha, et al., 2012).

Research Question Two: What factors do undergraduate international students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions?

For Prospective International Students' College Choice Decisions

The five college choice factors that respondents indicated were most important for prospective international students to consider when making their college choice decisions were academic programs/majors offered, anticipated job opportunities, academic reputation-rankings, campus life, and academic reputation-other means (Table 4.5). The five factors that respondents indicated were least important for prospective international students to consider when making their college choice decisions were promotional materials, high school counselors' opinions, friends'/peers' opinions, athletic teams, and the religious affiliation of institutions (Table 4.5). Of the ten most highly ranked factors, eight were pull factors and two were push-and-pull factors (Table 4.5). The most highly rated push factor, "parents' opinions," was the eighteenth most highly rated factor (Table 4.5).

Few respondents offered other factors that they think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions. The only other factors that were offered by multiple respondents were city size, availability of student resources, fit with students at institution, and the institution's commitment to internationalization (Table 4.6).

Research Question Three: Does the degree of importance ascribed to these factors vary according to key demographic variables?

Home Country: Respondents' Own College Choice Decisions

Respondents from China considered the religious affiliation of institutions significantly more important in their college choice decisions than respondents who were not from China (Table 4.8). More than 90% of respondents were enrolled at public U.S. institutions with no religious affiliation; a sample of respondents from religiously affiliated colleges and universities may generate different findings. Nonetheless, these findings may reflect a recent trend among Chinese students in American higher education. According to Yan & Berliner, "Church is increasingly becoming a place for providing emotional or instrumental support" for Chinese students (2011, p. 537).

Home Country: For Prospective International Students' College Choice Decisions

Respondents from China rated parents' opinions and the religious affiliation of institutions significantly more important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider than respondents who were not from China (Table 4.9). The relatively elevated recommended importance of parents among Chinese respondents may be a manifestation of filial piety in China and in Confucian philosophy that previous research on international college choice highlights (Bodycott, 2009).

Respondents from China rated academic programs/majors offered, location, campus life, size of classes, and perceived fit significantly less important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider than respondents who were not from China (Table 4.9).

While previous research pertaining to college choice does not address the question of which factors undergraduate international students in American higher education think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider, these findings suggest that Chinese students may experience American higher education differently from other international students. Despite there being only a single factor (religious affiliation) that respondents from China considered significantly more important in their own college choice decisions than respondents who were not from China, Chinese respondents rated the importance of two factors significantly more important and five factors significantly less important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider than respondents who were not from China. Just as different groups of students engage in the college choice process differently (Choudaha, R., Orosz, K. & Chang, L., 2012; Paulsen & St. John, 2002), different groups of students may experience American higher education differently.

Anticipated Year of Graduation: Respondents' Own College Choice Decisions

Respondents within two years of their anticipated graduation date (upperclassmen) considered friends'/peers' opinions and academic reputation-rankings significantly more important in their college choice decisions than respondents who were more than two years from their expected graduation date (underclassmen) (Table 4.10). Upperclassmen considered diversity of the student body, a campus visit, religious affiliation, and athletic teams at institutions significantly less important in their college choice decisions than respondents who were underclassmen (Table 4.10).

Anticipated Year of Graduation: For Prospective International Students' College Choice

Decisions

Upperclassmen rated the academic reputation of institutions-rankings significantly more important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider than underclassmen (Table 4.11).

These findings seem to be inconsistent with recent studies that indicate that rankings are playing an increasingly larger role in students' college choice decisions (Hesel, 2013). If the trend suggests that prospective students across the years are progressively caring more about rankings, then one might expect underclassmen, those who were most recently prospective students, to rate rankings more important in their own college choice decisions and for prospective students to consider than upperclassmen.

Satisfaction with College Choice Decision

Whether respondents were satisfied with their college choice decision made no significant difference in their responses to the survey. There were no significant differences between respondents who indicated they had made the right college choice decision and those who indicated they had made the wrong college choice decision, either when rating factors in their own college choice decisions or if advising prospective international students (Tables 4.12 and 4.13). These findings suggest that respondents who feel they made the wrong college choice decision relied on the same factors as students who feel they made the right college choice. These findings could also indicate that the reasons behind students feeling they made the wrong college choice decisions

may vary among students to such an extent that no patterns emerged when these students considered the importance of factors for perspective students.

It should be noted that the percentage of participants who indicated that they had made the right college choice – 80.6 percent – seems to be consistent with national averages. The American Council on Education surveyed recent graduates of U.S. institutions, and “nearly 80 percent of young alumni reported that they would choose to attend the same institution again” (Corrigan, p. 1, 2011).

Attended High School in U.S.: Respondents’ Own College Choice Decisions

Respondents who attended high school in the U.S. considered a campus visit significantly more important in their college choice decisions than respondents who did not attend high school in the U.S. (Table 4.14). This finding is unsurprising; in many respects, it is easier to visit colleges and universities in the U.S. when attending a high school in the U.S.

Attended High School in U.S.: For Prospective International Students’ College Choice Decisions

There were no significant differences between respondents who attended high school in the U.S. and those who did not attend high school in the U.S. (Table 4.15),

Research on international students in American high schools is scarce, but these findings suggest that, in regards to this inquiry into college choice, such students do not differ substantially from international students who did not attend American high schools.

Use of Paid Agents

Whether respondents used paid education agents made no significant difference in their responses to the survey. There were no significant differences between respondents

who indicated they had used paid education agents during the college choice process and those who indicated they had not used paid education agents, either when rating factors in their own college choice decisions or if advising prospective international students (Tables 4.16 and 4.17). Despite recent research that indicates international students whose interests are “not exclusively academic” are more likely to rely on paid agents (Choudaha, et al., 2012, p. 7), these findings suggest that, in regards to this inquiry into college choice, students who used paid agents do not differ substantially from international students who did not use paid agents.

Principal Component Analysis

Item loadings for the 23 factors relating to respondents’ own college choice decisions indicated seven underlying factors (Table 4.18), which may be labeled Campus Environment, Academic Reputation, Academic and Social Fit, Economic Costs and Benefits, Athletic Teams and Campus Visit, College Student and Recent Graduate Opinions, and Counselor, Friend, Parent Opinions. Item loadings for the 23 factors relating to what respondents think prospective undergraduate international students should consider indicated seven underlying factors (Table 4.19), which may be labeled Fit with Campus Environment, Campus Support and Job Prospects, Academic Reputation and Offerings, College Student and Recent Graduate Opinions, Parent, Counselor, Friend Opinions and Athletic Teams, Location and Campus Feel, and Tuition and Fees.

These classifications of factors are based on relationships among the factors, which reveal structure to how the factors interrelate. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this revealed structure is that the relationships among factors and the respective classifications differ according to whether relating to respondents’ own college choice

decisions (Table 4.18) and or to what respondents think prospective undergraduate international students should consider indicated seven underlying factors (Table 4.19).

Research Question Four: Does the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ1 differ from the degree of importance ascribed to factors in response to RQ2?

Respondents ascribed significantly more importance to parents' opinions and to academic reputation based on rankings in their own college choice decisions than when advising prospective international students on how they should make their college choice decisions (Table 4.20). In other words, respondents recommended that parents' opinions and rankings should play a smaller role in the college choice decisions of prospective international students than the role they played in respondents' own college choice decisions.

Respondents ascribed significantly less importance to the following 15 factors in their own college choice decisions than when advising prospective international students on how they should make their college choice decisions (Table 4.20):

- Recent College/University Graduates' Opinions
- Tuition and Fees at Institutions
- Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions
- Location of Institutions
- Campus Life at Institutions: social atmosphere and opportunities
- Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination at Institutions
- Campus Visit
- Size of Classes
- Diversity of Student Body at Institutions
- Percentage of International Students at Institutions
- Religious Affiliation of Institutions
- Athletic Teams at Institutions
- Availability of International Student Support Services at Institutions
- Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree from Institutions
- Perceived Fit with Institutions

In other words, respondents recommended that each of these factors should play a larger role in the college choice decisions of prospective international students than the role they played in respondents' own college choice decisions. Most of these factors are institutional, but they concern neither academic reputation nor academic program offerings. Instead, the factors in this list relate primarily to those institutional characteristics outside of academics, like support services, student life, make up of student body, and financial aid. These findings suggest that current undergraduate international students' ideas about what factors should influence the college choice decisions of perspective international students are aligned with those in the field who emphasize "the importance of understanding an individual student's needs and how they 'fit' with the missions and identity of an individual college community" and seek to attenuate the role of "ratings and rankings" (CTCL, 2013).

Similarly, these findings appear to demonstrate an appreciation among international students for institutional efforts related to internationalization. Participants recommended that several factors associated with internationalization, i.e., availability of international student support services, percentage of international students, diversity of student body, perceived level of crime and discrimination, and campus life, should play a larger role in the college choice decisions of prospective international students than the role they played in respondents' own college choice decisions. International students seem to value institutional commitment to internationalization more after matriculation than during the college choice process.

Furthermore, these findings may also reveal the salient information asymmetries that confront prospective international students when entering American higher

education. The factors for which there are significant differences between the levels of importance in respondents' own college choice decisions and the levels of importance when advising prospective international students may represent the elements of American higher education that were unexpected or for which students were unprepared. To the extent these differences illuminate aspects of American higher education where international students' expectations differ from their actual experiences, these differences may also highlight where information imbalances exist between prospective students and American higher education institutions.

Conclusions

1. The preeminent factors in previous college choice research appear to remain preeminent in the college choice decisions of today's undergraduate international students.
2. Undergraduate international students who are not satisfied with their college choice decisions, as a group, appear to base their college choice decisions on the same factors as undergraduate international students who are satisfied with their college choice decisions.
3. Undergraduate international students who attended high school in the U.S. appear to base their college choice decisions on the same factors as undergraduate international students who did not attend high school in the U.S.
4. Undergraduate international students' experiences in American higher education shape what they think should be important for prospective international students to consider when making college choice decisions.

Implications for Practice

For Prospective Undergraduate International Students (Their Families and Counselors)

Prospective international students who are engaged in the college choice process often seek resources to aid their journey to matriculation at a U.S. higher education institution. Among this study's preeminent contributions is the collection of recommendations from current international students who have experienced both the college choice process and undergraduate student life at American colleges and universities on how prospective international students should make their college choice decisions. Prospective international students, their families and counselors may review which factors current international students rate as most important for prospective international students to consider in their college choice decision. This guidance may inform the college choice decisions of prospective international students.

Respondents ascribed significantly different levels of importance to most college choice factors when comparing their own college choice decisions to their guidance to prospective international students. These findings amount to a collective shout from current international students to prospective international students announcing the following:

- Pay less attention to your parents' opinions and to college rankings when you make your college choice decision than we did.
- Pay more attention to recent college graduates' opinions, tuition and fees, financial aid, location, campus life, perceived level of crime and racial discrimination, student body diversity, percentage of international students, availability of international students services, anticipated job opportunities, perceived fit, religious affiliation, and athletic teams when you make your college choice decision than we did..., and consider making visits to college campuses.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that as undergraduate international students participate in American higher education, their notions about what is important in their higher education change. Prospective undergraduate international students, and their families and counselors, should expect this propensity to change and consider it when making their college choice decisions.

For Institutions

U.S. colleges and universities that seek to recruit international students may target their recruiting efforts on those factors that international students rated most important in their college choice decisions and that correspond to the strengths of the institutions. More generally, institutions may harness the findings of this research to better serve their institutions' international student population. For instance, the fact that respondents recommended that the availability of international student support services should play a more important role in the college choice decisions of prospective international students than it played in respondents' own college choice decisions suggests that international students value international student services significantly more after matriculation. Institutions should ensure access to international student services' to meet the needs of their students and to facilitate international recruitment efforts.

In an effort to minimize information asymmetries that face prospective international students, institutions may embolden existing endeavors to disseminate perspectives and recommendations of their enrolled international students. Facilitating communication between current international students and perspective international students, via videos, online message boards, social media, and other mechanisms, may provide prospective international students greater access to helpful information.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. Subsequent studies could include a greater number of undergraduate international students at a larger number and broader scope of institutions to more completely reflect the undergraduate international student population in American higher education and to enable a more robust analysis (i.e. analyze results among home countries). Researchers could seek respondents from community colleges, less selective four-year institutions, religiously affiliated institutions, liberal arts colleges, institutions located near the borders with Canada and Mexico, and historically black college and universities.

2. Future studies could investigate the influence of additional demographic variables and attributes that are unaddressed in this study. Researchers may explore socioeconomic status, gender, proximity to urban centers, and whether participants attend their first-choice institution.

3. Future studies could employ different data collection methods, including interviews and focus groups, to allow for greater depth of data and analysis.

4. Researchers could conduct a similar study of international graduate students in American higher education.

5. Researchers could conduct a similar study of parents of international students to ascertain the experiences and opinions of other stakeholders in the college choice process.

References

- Adler, P. S. (1975). The transitional experience: An alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 15*(4), 13-23.
- Althen, G. (1995). *The handbook of foreign student advising*. Yarmouth, Me., USA: Intercultural Press.
- Alwin, D. F., & Otto, L. B. (1977). High school context effects on aspirations. *Sociology of Education, 50*(4), pp. 259-273.
- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11*(3-4), 290-305.
- American Council on Education (ACE). (1995). *Educating americans for a world in flux: Ten ground rules for internationalizing higher education*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- American Council on Education (ACE). (2012). *Mapping internationalization on college campuses*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.
- Anderson, S. (2013). *The importance of international students in america: NFAP policy brief*. National Foundation for American Policy.
- Arum, S., & Van de Water, J. (1992). The need for a definition of international education in U.S. universities. In C. Klasek (Ed.), *Bridges to the future: Strategies for*

- internationalizing higher education* (pp. 191-203). Carbondale, IL: Association of International Education Administrators.
- Bergerson, A. A. (2009). College choice as a comprehensive process. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 35(4), 21-46.
- Bergerson, A. A. (2009). Current trends in college choice research. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 35(4), 11-20.
- Bodycott, P. (2009). Choosing a higher education study abroad destination . *Journal of Research in International Education*, 8(3), 349-373.
- Bowen, W. G., Chingos, M. M., McPherson, M. S., & Tobin, E. M. (2009). *Crossing the finish line : Completing college at america's public universities*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Boyd, L. E. (2008). A study of how international student services and policies have changed as a result of 9/11. (Boston University, Boston University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*,
- Boyle, R. P. (1966). The effect of the high school on students' aspirations. *American Journal of Sociology*, 71(6), pp. 628-639.
- Breneman, D. W., Pusser, B., & Turner, S. E. (2006). *Earnings from learning : The rise of for-profit universities*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

- Cabrera, A. F., & La Nasa, S. M. (2000). Understanding the college-choice process. *New Directions for Institutional Research New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2000(107), 5-22.
- Cain, P. P., & McClintock, J. (1984). The ABC's of choice. *Journal of College Admissions*, 105(105), 15-21.
- Capraro, A. J., Patrick, M. L., & Wilson, M. (2004). Attracting college candidates: The impact of perceived social life. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 14(1), 93-105.
- Chapman, D. W. (1981). A model of student college choice. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 52(5), pp. 490-505.
- Chen, L. (2007). East-asian students' choice of canadian graduate schools. *International Journal of Educational Advancement*, 7(4), 271-306.
- Chen, L. (2008). Internationalization or international marketing? two frameworks for understanding international students' choice of canadian universities. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 18(1), 1-33.
- Choudaha, R., Chang, L. and Kono, Y. (2013). *International student mobility trends 2013: Towards responsive recruitment strategies*. World Education Services, New York.
- Retrieved from www.wes.org/RAS.

- Choudaha, R., Orosz, K. and Chang, L. (2012). *Not all international students are the same: Understanding segments, mapping behavior*. World Education Services, New York. Retrieved from www.wes.org/RAS.
- Chung, K. C., Fam, K. S., & Holdsworth, D. K. (2009). Impact of cultural values on young consumers' choice of international tertiary education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 1(1), 54-67.
- Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 91(3), 540-572.
- Colleges That Change Lives, Inc. *About CTCL*. Retrieved October 7, 2013, from <http://www.ctcl.org/about/ctcl>.
- Corrigan, M. (2011). *Ask the alumni: The results of a national alumni survey*. American Council on Education, Washington, DC. Retrieved from www.acenet.edu.
- Cox, J. L. (1988). The overseas student: Expatriate, sojourner or settler? *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 78(S344), 179-184.
- de Wit, H. (2002). *Internationalization of higher education in the united states of america and europe : A historical, comparative, and conceptual analysis*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- DesJardins, S. L., Ahlburg, D. A., & McCall, B. P. (2006). An integrated model of application, admission, enrollment, and financial aid. *Journal of Higher Education*, 77(3), 381-429.

- DesJardins, S. L., Dundar, H., & Hendel, D. D. (1999). Modeling the college application decision process in a land-grant university. *Economics of Education Review*, 18(1), 117-32.
- Dessoff, A. (2009). Recruiting's brave new world. *International Educator* (pp. 16-26). NAFSA: Association of International Educators. December 2009.
- Dobbert, M. L. L. (1998). The impossibility of internationalizing students by adding materials to courses. In J. A. Mestenhauser, & B. J. Ellingboe (Eds.), *Reforming the higher education curriculum: Internationalizing the campus* (pp. 53-68). Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Don Hossler, & Stage, F. K. (1992). Family and high school experience influences on the postsecondary educational plans of ninth-grade students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 29(2), pp. 425-451.
- Dynarski, S. (2002). The behavioral and distributional implications of aid for college. *The American Economic Review*, 92(2, Papers and Proceedings of the One Hundred Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association), pp. 279-285.
- Ellingboe, B. J. (1998). Divisional strategies to internationalize a campus portrait: Results, resistance, and recommendations from a case study at a U.S. university. In J. A. Mestenhauser, & B. J. Ellingboe (Eds.), *Reforming the higher education curriculum: Internationalizing the campus* (pp. 198-228)

- Freeman, K. (1997). Increasing african americans' participation in higher education: African american high-school students' perspectives. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 68(5), pp. 523-550.
- Galotti, K. M., & Mark, M. C. (1994). How do high school students structure an important life decision? A short-term longitudinal study of the college decision-making process. *Research in Higher Education*, 35(5), pp. 589-607.
- Gardner, P. W., Ritblatt, S. N., & Beatty, J. R. (2000). Academic achievement and parental school involvement as a function of high school size. *The High School Journal*, 83(2), pp. 21-27.
- Gareis, E. (2012). Intercultural friendship: Effects of home and host region. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 1-20.
- Grutter v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. 306 (2003).
- Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E. (1963). An extension of the U-curve hypothesis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 19(3), 33-47.
- Hanassab, S., & Tidwell, R. (Winter 2002). International students in higher education: Identification of needs and implications for policy and practice. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 6(4), 305-322.
- Hare, J. (2012). Foreign choices a family affair. *The Australian*. October 10, 2012.

- Harari, M. (1992). Internationalization of the curriculum. In C. B. Klasek, B. J. Garavalia, K. J. Kellerman & Association of International Education Administrators. (Eds.), *Bridges to the future: Strategies for internationalizing higher education* (pp. 52-79). Carbondale, IL: Association of International Education Administrators.
- Hathaway, T. (2011). How american colleges can better serve chinese applicants. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 58(3), A26.
- Hayden, M., & Thompson, J. (1995). International education: The crossing of frontiers. *International Schools Journal*, 15(1), 13-20.
- Hearn, J. C. (1991). Academic and nonacademic influences on the college destinations of 1980 high school graduates. *Sociology of Education*, 64(3), pp. 158-171.
- Herfkins, E. (2006). Keynote presentation on the importance of global education. *Georgetown university global education conference*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University.
- Hesel, R. (2013). Influence of the rankings on college choice. *StudentPoll*. Arts and Science Group. Retrieved from www.artsci.com/studentpoll/october/index.aspx.
- Hossler, D., Schmit, J. L., & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to college: How social, economic, and educational factors influence the decisions students make*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. S. (1987). Studying student college choice: A three-phase model and the implications for policymakers. *College and University*, 62(3), 207-21.

- Hoxby, C. M., Avery, C. & National Bureau of Economic Research. (2003). *Do and should financial aid packages affect students' college choices?*
- Hurtado, S. (2005). Research shows benefits of linking diversity and civic goals . *Diversity Digest*, 9(1), 6-7.
- Hurtado, S., Inkelas, K. K., Briggs, C., & Rhee, B. (1997). *Differences in college access and choice among Racial/Ethnic groups: Identifying continuing barriers* Springer Netherlands.
- Institute of International Education. (2012). *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>.
- Ives, P. (2003). *EducationUSA: U.S. Higher Education's Little Known Asset*. American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. Retrieved from <http://www4.aacrao.org/semsource/sem/index847f.html?fa=view&id=2248>.
- Jackson, G. A. (1978). Financial aid and student enrollment. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 49(6), pp. 548-574.
- Johnson, R. G., & Stewart, N. R. (1991). Counselor impact on college choice. *School Counselor*, 39(2), 84.
- Kalsner, L. (1991). *Issues in college student retention*.
- Kim, S., & Kim, R. (2010). Microaggressions experienced by international students attending U. S. institutions of higher education. In D. W. Sue (Ed.),

- Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact* (Wiley ed., pp. 171).
- Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kim, J. K., & Gasman, M. (2011). In search of a "good college": Decisions and determinations behind asian american students' college choice. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52(6), 706-728.
- Kinzie, J., Palmer, M., Hayek, J., Hossler, D., Jacob, S. A., Cummings, H., et al. (2004). *Fifty years of college choice: Social, political and institutional influences on the decision-making process. new agenda series. volume 5, number 3*. Lumina Foundation for Education.
- Klasek, C. B., Garavalia, B. J., Kellerman, K. J., & Association of International Education Administrators. (1992). *Bridges to the future : Strategies for internationalizing higher education*. Carbondale, Ill. (Anthony Hall 218, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Carbondale 62901): Association of International Education Administrators.
- Knight, J. (2003). Updated internationalization definition. *International Higher Education*, 33, 2-3.
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8(1), 5-31.

- Komiya, N., & Eells, G. T. (2001). Predictors of attitudes toward seeking counseling among international students. *Journal of College Counseling, 4*(2), 153-160.
- Kotler, P., & Fox, K. F. A.,. (1985). *Strategic marketing for educational institutions*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Kwon, Y. (2009). Factors affecting international students' transition to higher education institutions in the united states. -- from the perspective of office of international students. *College Student Journal, 43*(4), 1020-1036.
- Leask, B. (1999). *Internationalisation of the curriculum: Key challenges and strategies*. Underdale, Australia: IDP Education Australia 1999 Australian International Education Conference.
- Lee, E. S. (1966). A theory of migration. *Demography, 3*(1), pp. 47-57.
- Lee, J., & Rice, C. (2007). Welcome to america? international student perceptions of discrimination. *Higher Education, 53*(3), 381-409.
- Lee, J. J. (Fall 2008). Beyond borders: International student pathways to the united states. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 12*(3), 308-327.
- Leong, F. T. L., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1982). *A survey of incoming international students*. College Park, Md.: Counseling Center, University of Maryland.

- Leong, F. T. L., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1986). A comparison of international and U.S. students' preferences for help sources. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 27*(5), 426-30.
- Letawsky, Nicole R. Schneider, Raymond G. Pedersen, Paul M. Palmer, Carolyn J. (2003). Factors influencing the college selection process of student-athletes: Are their factors similar to non-athletes? *College Student Journal, 37*(4), 604.
- Levin, J. S. (2001). *Globalizing the community college : Strategies for change in the twenty-first century*. New York: Palgrave.
- Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian fulbright grantees visiting the united states. *International Social Science Bulletin, 7*, 45-51.
- Mansell, M. (1981). Transcultural experience and expressive response. *Communication Education, 30*(2), 93-108.
- Marginson, S. (2006). Dynamics of national and global competition in higher education. *Higher Education, 52*(1), 1-39.
- Marion, P. B. (1986). Research on foreign students at colleges and universities in the united states. *New Directions for Student Services, 1986*(36), 65-82.
- Marmolejo, F. (2010). Internationalization of higher education: The good, the bad, and the unexpected. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, October 22*.

- Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G. N. (2002). "Push-pull" factors influencing international student destination choice. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 16(2), 82-90.
- McDonough, P. (1997). *Choosing colleges : How social class and schools structure opportunity*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- McDonough, P. M., Korn, J. S., & Yamasaki, E. (1997). Access, equity, and the privatization of college counseling. *The Review of Higher Education the Review of Higher Education*, 20(3), 297-317.
- McIntire, D., & Willer, P. (1992). *Working with international students and scholars on american campuses*. Washington, D.C.: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.
- Melcher, T. (2010). *Busted: The top 5 ways that chinese students cheat on their undergraduate applications to american schools (and what schools can do about it)* No. White Paper Number 4). Beijing, China: Zinch Inc.
- Mingat, A., & Eicher, J. C. (1982). Higher education and employment markets in france. *Higher Education*, 11(2), pp. 211-220.
- Muhammad, C. G. (2008). African american students and college choice: A consideration of the role of school counselors. *NASSP Bulletin NASSP Bulletin*, 92(2), 81-94.
- Mullen A.L. (2009). Elite destinations: Pathways to attending an ivy league university. *Br.J.Sociol.Educ.British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30(1), 15-27.

- NAFSA: Association of International Educators. (2007). *An international education policy for U.S. leadership, competitiveness, and security*. Washington, DC.
- Nash, D. (1991). The course of sojourner adaptation: A new test of the U-curve hypothesis. *Human Organization*, 50(3), 283-286.
- Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology*, (7), 177-182.
- Overton, J. L. (1992). The process of internationalization at minority institutions. In C. B. Klasek, B. J. Garavalia, K. J. Kellerman & Association of International Education Administrators. (Eds.), *Bridges to the future: Strategies for internationalizing higher education* (). Carbondale, IL: Association of International Education Administrators.
- Paulsen, M. B., ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education., & Association for the Study of Higher Education. (1990). *College choice : Understanding student enrollment behavior*. Washington, DC: School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University.
- Paulsen, M. B., & John, E. P. S. (2002). Social class and college costs: Examining the financial nexus between college choice and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(2), 189-236.
- Perez, P. A., & McDonough, P. M. (2008). Understanding latina and latino college choice: A social capital and chain migration analysis. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 7(3), 249-265.

- Perna, L. W., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., Thomas, S. L., Bell, A., Anderson, R., & Li, C. (2007). The role of college counseling in shaping college opportunity: Variations across high schools. *The Review of Higher Education, 31*(2), 131-159.
- Perna, L. W., & Titus, M. A. (2005). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment: An examination of Racial/Ethnic group differences. *The Journal of Higher Education, 76*(5), pp. 485-518.
- Person, A. E., & Rosenbaum, J. E. (2006). Chain enrollment and college enclaves: Benefits and drawbacks of latino college students' enrollment decisions. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 2006*(133), 51-60.
- Pervin, L. A. (1968). Performance and satisfaction as a function of individual-environment fit. *Psychological Bulletin Psychological Bulletin, 69*(1), 56-68.
- Pickert, S., & Turlington, B. (1992). *Internationalizing the undergraduate curriculum : A handbook for campus leaders*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.
- Pimpa, N. (2005). A family affair: The effect of family on thai students' choices of international education
. *Higher Education, 49*(No.4), 431-448.
- Pimpa, N. (2004). The relationship between thai students' choices of international education and their families. *International Education Journal, 5*(3), 352-359.

- Plank, S. B., & Jordan, W. J. (2001). Effects of information, guidance, and actions on postsecondary destinations: A study of talent loss. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), pp. 947-979.
- Pusser, B. (2002). Higher education, the emerging market, and the public good. In P. Graham, & P. Stacey (Eds.), *The knowledge economy and postsecondary education*, (pp. 105) National Academy Press.
- Ramirez, A. Y. (2001). "Parent involvement is like apple pie": A look at parental involvement in two states. *High School Journal*, 85(1), 1-9.
- Reay, D., Davies, J., David, M., & Ball, S. J. (2001). Choices of degree or degrees of choice? class, 'Race' and the higher education choice process. *Sociology*, 35(4), 855-874.
- Rosenbaum, J. E., Miller, S. R., & Krei, M. S. (1996). Gatekeeping in an era of more open gates: High school counselors' views of their influence on students' college plans. *American Journal of Education*, 104(4), pp. 257-279.
- Rowe, K. B. (2002). The college choice process of high school seniors: An investigation of significant influences. (Ed.D., Dowling College). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*,
- Schoorman, D. (1999). The pedagogical implications of diverse conceptualizations of internationalization: A U.S.-based case study. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 3(2), 19-46.

- Sewell, W. H., & Shah, V. P. (1968). Social class, parental encouragement, and educational aspirations. *American Journal of Sociology*, 73(5), pp. 559-572.
- Shanka, T., Quintal, V., & Taylor, R. (2005). Factors influencing international students' choice of an education destination -- A correspondence analysis. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 15(2), 31-46.
- Sherry, M., Thomas, P., & Chui, W. (2010). International students: A vulnerable student population. *Higher Education*, 60(1), 33-46.
- Snijders, T. A. B. (2001). Hypothesis testing: Methodology and limitations. *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Science*, 10, 7121-7127.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Ornelas, A. (2004). A critical race analysis of Latina/o and african american advanced placement enrollment in public high schools. *The High School Journal the High School Journal*, 87(3), 15-26.
- Sowa, P. A. (2002). How valuable are student exchange programs? *New Directions for Higher Education*, 117(117), 63-70.
- Sowa, P. A. (2002). How valuable are student exchange programs? *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2002(117), 63-70.
- Teichler, U. (2004). *The changing debate on internationalisation of higher education* Springer Netherlands.

- Ting-Toomey, S. (1999). *Communicating across cultures*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college : Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). Type of college and year enrolled for college students 15 years old and over, by age, sex, race, attendance status, control of school, and enrollment status. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/school/data/cps/2012/Tab05.xls>.
- University of Michigan. (2000). *Summary of the bakke case*. Retrieved 5/8, 2012, from http://www.vpcomm.umich.edu/admissions/faqs/bakke_sum.html
- Wang, Z. (2004). Studying in the united states: Chinese graduate students' experiences of academic adjustment. (Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign).
- Wilkins, S., & Huisman, J. (2011). International student destination choice: The influence of home campus experience on the decision to consider branch campuses. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 21(1), 61-83.
- Wolniak, G. C., & Engberg, M. E. (2007). The effects of high school feeder networks on college enrollment. *The Review of Higher Education the Review of Higher Education*, 31(1), 27-53.
- Yan, K. & Berliner, D. C. (2011). An examination of individual level Factors in stress and coping processes: Perspectives of Chinese international students in the united

- states. *Journal of College Student Development* 52(5), 523-542. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Yi, Z., & Hagedorn, L. (2011). College Application With or Without Assistance of an Education Agent: Experience of International Chinese Undergraduates in the US. *Journal of College Admission*, (212), 6-16.
- Zapf, M. K. (1993). Remote practice and culture shock: Social workers moving to isolated northern regions. *Social Work*, 38(6), 694-704.
- Zhai, L. (2004). Studying international students: Adjustment issues and social support. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 11(1), 97-104.
- Zhang, N., & Dixon, D. N. (2003). Acculturation and attitudes of asian international students toward seeking psychological help. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 31(3), 205-222.
- Zhang, Y., & Hagedorn, L. S. (2011). College application with or without assistance of an education agent: Experience of international chinese undergraduates in the US. *Journal of College Admission*, (212), 6-16.
- Zikopoulos, M., & Barber, E. G. (1986). *Choosing schools from afar : The selection of colleges and universities in the united states by foreign students*. New York, N.Y.: Institute of International Education.

Appendix 1: Printed Version of Online Survey Instrument

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: The purpose of this research is to learn more about how international undergraduate students in American higher education selected the college or university they attend (a process known as college choice) and to explore how their experience in American higher education influences which factors they consider important in college choice. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment for the primary researcher's doctoral dissertation.

WHAT YOU WILL DO IN THE STUDY: As a participant, you will complete an online survey instrument that the researcher developed to explore the factors 1.) that influenced your college choice decision and 2.) that you think are important for prospective undergraduate international students to consider when making their college choice decisions. The survey is anonymous. Participants may skip any question and may stop the survey at any time.

TIME REQUIRED: The study will require about 15 minutes of your time.

ANONYMOUS DATA: Data will be anonymous, which means that names will not be collected or linked to the data, but it may be possible for the researcher to determine participants' identities based on answers to demographic questions. The researcher will not attempt to identify participants. All data will be reported in the aggregate.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

RISKS: There are no anticipated risks in this study.

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help us understand more about the college choice process of international students and may generate information that could help prospective international students and their families navigate and clarify the complex process of college choice.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Brian T. Ullman, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903

INSTRUCTIONS: Previous research on college choice and international students in American higher education suggests that several factors may influence international students college choice decisions. Click Continue to begin the survey, and follow the prompts.

Please rate the following factors according to how important they were in your decision to attend the college/university you selected.

[Not Important.....Very Important]

	1	2	3	4	5
Parents Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High School Counselors Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends/Peers Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
College/University Students Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recent College/University Graduates Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Reputation of Institutions, as determined by rankings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Reputation of Institutions, as determined by other means	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promotional Materials from Institutions (including institutional web sites)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Location of Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Campus Life at Institutions: social atmosphere and opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Campus Visit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Size of Classes at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Athletic Teams at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of International Student Support Services at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree from Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perceived Fit with Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reflecting on your experience as a student in the U.S., how important would you rate the following factors if you were advising prospective international students on how they should decide which U.S. college or university to attend?

[Not Important.....Very Important]

	1	2	3	4	5
Parents Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High School Counselors Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends/Peers Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
College/University Students Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recent College/University Graduates Opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Reputation of Institutions, as determined by rankings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Reputation of Institutions, as determined by other means	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promotional Materials from Institutions (including institutional web sites)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Programs/Majors Offered at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuition and Fees at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of Financial Aid from Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Location of Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Campus Life at Institutions: social atmosphere and opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perceived Level of Crime and Racial Discrimination at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Campus Visit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Size of Classes at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diversity of Student Body at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Percentage of International Students at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religious Affiliation of Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Athletic Teams at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of International Student Support Services at Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anticipated Job Opportunities with a Degree from Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perceived Fit with Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What other factors not listed above, if any, influenced your decision to attend the institution you selected?

What other factors not listed above, if any, would you recommend prospective undergraduate international students consider when making their college choice decisions?

What is your home country?

How many years have you been enrolled at your current institution?

1. Less than one
2. Between one and two
3. Between two and three
4. More than three

What is your current status at your institution?

1. Undergraduate student
2. Graduate student
3. Recent graduate
4. Other

When do you expect to graduate from your current degree program?

1. Academic year 2012-2013
2. Academic year 2013-2014
3. Academic year 2014-2015
4. Academic year 2015-2016 or later
5. Other

What is your major area of study?

How satisfied are you with your current institution?

	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you feel like you made the right college choice?

1. Yes
2. No

How many other colleges or universities in the U.S. have you attended as a full time student?

1. None
2. One
3. Two
4. Three
5. More than three

Did you attend high school in the U.S.?

1. Yes
2. No

Did your parents attend a college or university in the U.S. (undergraduate or graduate studies)?

1. Yes
2. No

Did you use paid educational agents or counselors when you were applying to universities?

1. Yes
2. No