INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND CHANGING POLICY:

EXPERIENCE, LIFE, AND PLANS AFTER GRADUATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This research is a qualitative study that utilizes 17 international students'

experiences in the U.S. Specifically, I examine the aspects of immigration regulations

and policies regarding international students and the students' reactions to those

policies—from becoming to maintaining status to planning after graduation—by using

qualitative interviews. I also weave in my own experience, as an international student,

along with findings from my interview participants to understand this particular social

situation. This method is conceptualized as sociological introspection. In this research, I

argue that immigration regulations and policies are a tool of U.S. political administrations

that effectively regulate immigrants' lives, as well as international students' lives (who

are a subgroup of immigrants more broadly). My research suggests the current United

States administration has created a moral panic over immigration, or the threat of

immigration. As a result, the political rhetoric causes international students to experience

negative emotions, such as anxiety, fear, and concern. I use Critical Race Theory (CRT)

and Racial Formation Theory (RFT) as my overarching theoretical frameworks. Both

provide the tools to orient my research and findings, and they provided me with an

understanding of how the current U.S. administration frames and regulates immigrants

and international students as the "other." I have four main findings: (1) the emotions and

experiences of what it takes to become an international student; (2) what international

students undergo in the process of maintaining legal status; (3) their emotional response

to the current U.S. administration's policies, both proposed and enacted as it relates to

immigration and international students; and (4) how all of this affects students' plans

after graduation. Finally, this research contributes to comprehending this phenomenon in

a unique and challenging time in the geographic and social setting of the American

South, specifically the state of Tennessee. I suggest that future research use my findings

in other geographical settings and under future political administrations.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Education is well-known as one important way to succeed. Many jobs require a minimum degree in order to accept a person for a position. Education is crucial for people at some level because in many countries, they require their population to have a basic education (i.e. high school). The quality of each school, college, or university, as well as country, varies depending on the effectiveness of its resources such as teachers, materials, and curriculum. The poll of the International Student Admissions Service (ISAS) studied 1,700 students in August and September 2017 and found that the three most likely destinations for study abroad were Canada (62%), America (42%), and Europe (16%), primarily looking for high academic rankings, job opportunities after graduation, a safe and secure environment, vibrant cultural life, and geographical beauty. More importantly, host countries are likely attractive to students if they have a "welcoming nature" and surging economy (Bhardwa 2017).

Some people desire to expand their knowledge and experience through study abroad because it enhances education via experiences that are not available at college campuses in their country such as foreign language fluency, cross-cultural learning, and advanced technology. Moreover, skills that develop through study abroad are valuable in the workplace in terms of an increasingly global marketplace as well as contributing to social, emotional, and intellectual development. Previous literature shows that study abroad results in four categories of outcomes: knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative learning (ASHE Higher Education Report 2012). Degrees from study abroad programs are also more acceptable and more open to career

opportunities in the home country, as well as able to fill the needed positions in the host country. These are some of the reasons for many students deciding to continue their educational path in another country, who are called by the host country as "an international student."

Some international students expect more than just degree completion, they also want to have a chance to have a career or an internship in the host country after graduation. It is also important to understand that the regulations and requirements for international students vary in each host country. For the United States, an international student must obtain the student visas (J, M, and F), which I will talk about in the next section, and also must maintain her/his status by following regulations. The U.S. regulations relating to international students shape students' lives, I suggest from my experience as an international student, in various stages (as long as they have the student visa statuses) from becoming, maintaining, and planning after graduation. The regulations control what international students can or cannot do during their statuses such as attending school, working, and even getting a driver's license. Thus, they need to plan those processes ahead, but under regulations. At this point, if regulations change, it could affect a student's life and plan while they live in the host country, as well as after finishing degrees. To simplify, a changing policy or regulation may cause students to rethink their lives as an international student which will sometimes cause anxiety, fear, and turmoil about an uncertain life and future.

An unwelcomed immigration policy or a restricting regulation could affect the enrollment of new international students. In school year (SY) 2016–17, international enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities increased three percent from the prior year,

but it is the slowest growth rate since 2009–10. Zong and Batalova (2018) suggest that multiple factors contribute to slowed school enrollment in the United States, including the rising cost of U.S. higher education, student visa delays and denials which may result from the stricter visa screening process, and an environment increasingly marked by rhetoric and policies that make life more difficult for immigrants. Moreover, changing conditions and opportunities in students' home countries and increasing competition from other countries for students are also the important factors.

The host countries' policies are the important condition to push/pull international students from one another. The host countries have witnessed the growing student enrollment. For example, in 2013, Germany's government announced plans to increase its number of international students to 350,000 by 2020 – a goal it reached during the 2016-2017 school year. Canada hopes to attract 450,000 international students by 2022 and has even taken recent steps to give international students an easier path to citizenship. (Haynie 2018).

To summarize, these host countries' plans influence student enrollment in their country, which could be resulting in less enrollment in the United States, from 28 percent (2001) to 24 percent (2017). Christopher Viers, Associate Vice President for International Services at Indiana University mentioned that "It's no coincidence that the proportion of students seeking higher education in Canada and elsewhere has increased so significantly in the last year, while the U.S. share of globally mobile students is declining" (Haynie 2018).[1]

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[1] Haynie, Devon. 2018. "The Great Game for International Students." Retrieved September 28, 2018 (https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-01

Before looking closely to the international student problem and visa, I introduce the United States immigration regulations. All visitors are required to have a visa before travelling to a port of entry, airport or land border crossing in order to indicate specific purpose and for inspection to enter the United States. (U.S. Department of State 2018). There are two main types of visa that the visitor must obtain, which are defined by U.S. immigration law: "Nonimmigrant visas" (for travel to the United States on a temporary basis), and "Immigrant visas" (for travel to live permanently in the United States). However, not all countries are able to qualify for a U.S. visa. The news titled "Court Order on Presidential Proclamation" on the U.S. Department of State website said:

> …The preliminary injunctions had prohibited the government from fully enforcing or implementing the entry restrictions of Presidential Proclamation 9645 (P.P.) titled 'Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for detecting Attempted Entry into the United States by Terrorists or other Public-Safety Threats' to nationals of six countries: Chad, Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Somalia. (U.S. Department of State 2017)

This shows that the U.S. government perceives immigrants and nonimmigrants based on their race, ethnicity, religion, and specific situation. However, from this point on, I will use the word 'immigrants' referring to both visitors (temporary and permanently basis) in order to lessen the confusion of the groups of people who hold visa. Following recent news, citizens from Muslim countries are often seen as terrorists, which continues the trend of fear of "foreign others" in the present American context. I more thoroughly discuss the history of immigration in the United States from the Chinese Exclusion Act to present day in a following section.

23/competition-for-international-students-increases-among-countries).

Redden (2018) also confirms that this travel ban allows other host countries to attract more enrollment from students in the Middle East. Middle Eastern international students may turn to Canada due to difficulties in getting visas to come to the U.S. Moreover, the article points out that students may choose Canada over the U.S. due to the promise of more stable poststudy work opportunities and clearer pipelines to immigration. In sum, the combination of welcoming policies of other host countries and the stricter regulations of U.S. could result in less enrollment of international students in the U.S.

In terms of international students, they are a subgroup of immigrants who must obtain a student visa which is in the nonimmigrant visa type. It is also categorized into three groups that are "F," "M," and "J." The "F" category is for academic students.[2] Students with F-1 visa must enroll full-time in academic institutions in order to maintain their status. F-1 students can apply for an internship, which is referred to as "Curricular Practical Training" (CPT) or after graduation called "Optional Practical Training (OPT), and transfer or change status directly from F-1 to H-1B by obtaining a suitable H-1B sponsorship position with an H-1B sponsor company. The H-1B visa is for specialty occupations which allows companies in the United States to temporarily employ foreign

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[2] The "M" is for nonacademic or vocational studies, which students must be involved in a "full course of study" and engaged in some types of language programs, flight school, technical studies, cooking classes, some types of technical studies, cosmetology programs, religious vocational schools, and other types of degree essentially programs that do not fall into the traditional academic category (U.S.-Immigration 2011), and the "J" visa program is for educational and cultural exchange programs. In fiscal year 2017, United States issued Nonimmigrant Visas "F" category, including both F-1 (students) and F-2 (spouse or child of F1), to 421,008 F Nonimmigrant Visas (U.S. Department of State 2018).

workers in occupations that require the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge and a bachelor's degree or higher in the specific specialty, or its equivalent.[3]

The F-1 student visa and the H1-B visa have been debated in the United States, particularly debates about the perception of "taking jobs away from U.S. citizens." In fact, the talk of immigrants taking jobs from Americans applies to undocumented immigrants as well. However, there are people who disagree with that statement above. They state temporary documented immigrants, such as international students and H1-B visa, do not harm the American economy or citizens. Sahil Hamal (2018), a tax technology developer intern at PricewaterhouseCoopers, gives his opinion on that statement that the STEM students, instead, help fill the demand in the tech job market in the United States rather than taking jobs from Americans. They also provide host countries various benefits such as bringing economic flows in the host country (Zong and Batalova 2018) as well as providing diversity to the host country environment (Barta, Chen, Jou, McEnaney, and Fuller 2018; Lobnibe 2009). They also become tax-payers. Moreover, it should be noted that the pathway of international students (F-1 visa) to get jobs (both internships or high-skilled jobs through H-1B visa) is even harder than it is for

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[3] The job that qualifies as a specialty occupation must meet one of the following criteria (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2018): bachelor's or higher degree or its equivalent, the degree requirement for the job is common to the industry or the job is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree, the employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position, and the nature of the specific duties is so specialized and complex that the knowledge required to perform the duties are usually associated with the attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree. This type of visa is not only for international students who already study and continue their training after graduation in United States, but people from outside the United States can also apply and be authorized to work in the country.

American citizens because of a complicated process which seems to result in limiting them from getting jobs. For example, employers do not know much about the H-1B sponsoring process (Nicolle 2017) or if they do, they could run into another issue such as not having enough funds to pay the cost associated with sponsorship (Dahiya 2017). Thus, companies are more likely to favor American citizens over international students (given that they have the same ability). Following, international students (F-1 visa) are less likely to be able to "take over" American's jobs. In terms of undocumented immigrants, they often work the unpleasant, back-breaking jobs that native-born workers are not willing to do, such as gutting fish or work on farm fields (Hoban 2017).

However, documented immigrants may not be seen in as negative of a light as undocumented or unauthorized immigrants. Citizens from some countries or particular ethnicities are also seen as more of a threat than others. In this research, I only study international students, who are documented immigrants and seem to have higher socioeconomic status, especially education, than some undocumented immigrants and other visa types, such as refugee status and those with a traveling visa. But it doesn't mean international students are not affected by the restrictions on immigration policy, even though, the government sees them as valuable pool of skilled immigrants, who are presumed to have advanced knowledge and language ability, for a labor force development (Migration Policy Institute 2019).

As aforementioned, the contemporary immigration trend that attempts to exclude and limit immigrants from coming into the United States surely contributes to the perception of immigrants as a threat to Americans' jobs. Moreover, undocumented immigrants are often stigmatized and criminalized because of their undocumented and/or

unauthorized status. Androff and Tavassoli (2012) also add that the criminalization of the undocumented has also contributed to discrimination that negatively affects *all* immigrant communities in the United States, both documented and undocumented immigrants.[4] Therefore, immigrants are often not welcomed. Though the United States has a long and sordid history of discriminatory immigration policy, the attacks on September 11, 2001, raised the national fear of immigrants as stand-ins for terrorists. In sum, immigrants are often perceived negatively as people or groups of people who take advantage of the U.S. and make America worse while the president desires to manage and "Make America Great Again."

Gelatt (2017) also supports this idea that this recent administration has negatively cast immigrants as threats to the national and economic security of U.S.-born workers not only banning travelers from certain countries but cutting the refugee resettlement ceiling and increasing screening for visa applicants.

For international students (F-1 visa), the research suggests that a higher percentage of student visa denials and restriction after graduation as well as other immigration news may have played a role in the recent decline of enrollment in U.S. universities. In the other words, these actions seem to scare students away. However, my research focuses on the current international students who are being affected by the rhetoric in the news and proposed policy currently, at every stage of holding student visa

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[4] For instance, undocumented Irish immigrants—who would normally be seen as "safe" or "safer" from ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement)—are being deported in larger numbers than before under the Trump Administration (National Public Radio, *All Things Considered*, January 22nd, 2018).

status. My research could also engender recommendations for new students who are in a deciding process of whether or not to try to study in the United States.

Interestingly, fear of immigrants seems to drive the U.S. government to invent/reform the immigration policy to be more precise and stricter. In order to understand how U.S. society fears immigrants, not only undocumented but documented ones as well, it is important to consider the rhetoric about immigrants. Most of time this is fueled by media that contribute to the "culture of fear." When people in the host country fear, are anxious, and panicked by public discourse and relationships, these emotions affect the way people interact with one another as individuals and as democratic agents such as how the U.S. population perceive immigrants. In other words, the perception towards immigrants contributes to an achievement of political goals, which is supported by emotional bias (Glassner 2009). To simplify, the host country panics about immigrants and demands an action toward these groups through policy. As a result, the policy engenders fear, anxiety, and concern for many immigrants.

In conclusion, immigration policy has systematically *shaped* and *defined* people, and *controlled* their action, which is processed and treated differently by perception of the host country – in the context of my research, the United States.

Statement of the Problem

Studying abroad is a big change in a student's life because it requires a combination of a strong discipline, intention, passion, emotion, language ability, financial support and resources. Students must prepare in every stage: becoming an international student, maintaining status, and planning life after graduation. Based on my experience, being an international student is complicated. First, when a student decides to study

abroad, many students start the process by studying the host country's language in order to improve their language comprehension for college language requirement. Other students may not have to formally study the host country's language and just apply directly to the universities. Either way, studying abroad requires dedication to a complicated process. For example, an international student who desires to study in the United States must have a student visa in order to gain entry and study in the country. Student visas are categorized by course of study (U.S. Department of State 2018).

In my research, I only examine the international students who hold the "F-1" visa for two reasons. First, the conditions of "J"[5] and "M"[6] visas do not allow students to get a similar pathway after graduation through internship options as does F-1. Each visa type already specifies students' purposes and pathways before they entry into the United States. Those J-1 and M-1 visas do not fall into the traditional academic route and do not have the same pathway after graduation. Therefore, they will not experience the same situation and will not be affected by the same policy restriction as F-1 students.

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[5] The J-1 visa is the cultural exchange visa and includes scholars, professors, teachers, trainees, specialists, foreign medical graduates, international visitors, au pairs, and participants in student travel/work program. Those people must be participating in a cultural exchange program which is limited the specific time of program (Haddal 2008). The M-1 visa is the visa for vocational and nonacademic courses of studies such as religious vocational schools, religious vocational schools, flight school, and technical studies.

[6] The M-1 visa is valid for only one year and students may apply for extensions for up to three years, while F-1 visa gives five years of general admission. However, for visa stays valid, a F-1 student must intend school full time. Students who hold M-1 visa cannot continue on to an academic or university program and have more restriction. However, the M-1 student can have an internship, but the period will be one month's internship for every four months of study. The duration of the internship may not exceed six months. Furthermore, the M-1 students cannot apply for a work permit for financial needs, nor can be employed by any particular employer (OptNation 2018).

The second reason for examining only F-1 visa students is that I desire to study this phenomenon as an insider. I am experiencing the process of becoming and maintaining my status as an international student which could be similar to the participants in this study, and the most important, which I emphasize in this research, is a feeling of anxiety and concern about their pathways after graduation due to the political environment and the media. My position as an insider could build insights, understanding of the situation, and the decision making of international students. In addition, I am going to experience this contemporary situation and political rhetoric. This could be a good opportunity for me as a researcher to build rapport with the participants.

Before applying for a visa, a student must be accepted to the university where they wish to do their college degree or language school. Each educational institution has their own requirement to approve students, for instance the university setting for my research requires proof of English proficiency, appropriate test scores (i.e. GMAT), and transcripts (usually non-U.S. transcripts have to be submitted course-by-course and evaluated from a NACES evaluation service). Additional program requirements include related health documents (i.e. proof of MMR, Varicella, Tuberculosis), letter of intent, letter of recommendation, and finally a financial statement indicating sources of support (College of Graduate Studies 2018). After that, if a student is approved by the educational institution, the university or college will give a student the document entitled an "I-20." However, for a language school, a student is required only to have a previous academic transcript and financial support in order to get I-20. This document includes student information, school information, program of study, and financial information. Also, a

student has to pay the SEVIS[7] fee and visa application fee before being able to make an appointment for a visa interview.

Later, they can move to the next process of applying for a student visa. These complicated processes seem to be a way for the United States to filter in the nonimmigrants who are "qualified" to be in the country. However, it is also understood as a useful strategy to protect U.S. citizens from "undesirable" or "unqualified" immigrants.

Maintaining immigrant status is governed by regulations as well. The U.S. Department of State issues student visas based on the student's intended purpose. This means that students should not take any action that detract from that purpose. Maintaining student status consists of attending full-time and passing all classes. If students believe that they will be unable to complete their program by the end date listed on form I-20, they must talk with the designated school official (DSO) about requesting a possible program extension, as well as discussing the appropriate annual vacation back to their home country (Homeland Security 2018). They are also restricted in employment as they may not work more than 20 hours a week on campus.

The last stage of being an international student is the transition to the job market after graduation for those who desire to work or have an internship in the United States. Every international student is able to apply for the Optional Practical Training (OPT)

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[7] SEVIS is a web-based system for maintaining information on international nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors in the United States. It is the core technology for the DHS in this critical mission. SEVIS implements Section 641 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which requires DHS to collect current information from nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors continually during their course of stay in the United States (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement 2019).

after graduation or apply for H1-B visa (specialty occupations in fields requiring highly specialized knowledge) in order to get a chance to practice their knowledge and experience in the real world. This will allow them to be in the United States with a documented status.

This final stage inspired me to study students' pathways after graduation under the current rhetoric of political discussions on immigration. The president seems to perceive immigrants as a threat and push restrictions on 'the others' in order to control and limit their chance to stay here, including international students. The media also deliver the president's agenda in public, which could drive immigrants to become concerned due to the administration's numerous reformations of immigration laws and regulations.

It is also interesting that it seems not to matter that the president's restrictions are just, bellicose speech, actually happening or going to happen. Regardless, the political trend is likely to cause a negative feeling about international students. On the one hand, international students have negative emotions in terms of feeling unwelcomed to be in the United States. Indeed, recent research indicates that harmful stereotypes, conservatism, and support for President Trump predicted higher negative attitudes toward internationals (Quinton 2019). On the other hand, the news or article headlines from both governmental and public sources, such as "USCIS Strengthens Protections to Combat H-1B Abuses" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2018), "Putting American Workers First: USCIS Announces Further Measures to Detect H-1B Visa Fraud and Abuse" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2017), "H-1B Visa: an uncertain path after college" (Lerner 2018), "For students on F1 visa hunting for jobs, Trump's America is

'closing the door'" (Natarajan 2018), "It's Getting Harder for International STEM Students to Find Work After Graduation (Merrick 2018), "Trump's 'Buy America, Hire America' Policy – And How It Affects International Students" (Nie 2018), and "I'm an international student trying to get a job on Wall Street and Trump has scuppered my chances" (Butcher 2016), could lead to feelings of being unwelcomed, students facing difficulties, and to distress over their pathway to stay in the United States as documented through OPT and H-1B visa for those who consume this kind of news. The concern is likely based on how much exposure they have to the news and current political rhetoric. For me as an insider, I too have anxiety about the situation because I consume this news, have conversations with international friends, and I do not have many available options due to the limitation of financial resources for furthering my education.

Each international student's life stages present how students are affected by regulations and policies. Especially, when the changing policy may cause changes to students' plans after graduation by restrictions on international students, as well as a new students' perceptions of enrollment in the U.S. This contemporary issue, which seems to be caused by the 'Buy American and Hire American Executive Order,' leads me to my first research question: **How are student's life experiences (becoming and maintaining status) and life adjustment due to policy/regulation and political changes?** I also hope to reveal how policy influences people's lives, decisions, and future, as well as to build a better understanding of why internships and trainings are important to international students after graduation.

Moreover, since most of the U.S. population are *actually* the sons and daughters of immigrants, it is interesting how some groups become dominant over others and what

strategies dominant groups (many whose ancestors were also immigrants) use to marginalize immigrants. I have shown how some immigrant groups are racialized and disparaged. This leads me to my second research question: **2a. How do international students perceive current political rhetoric? 2b. If their perceptions are negative, what contributes to these perceptions?** I now turn to the history of immigration policy and student visas in the U.S.

Brief History of Immigration Policy and Student Visa

In this section, I give a brief history of immigration policy and student visas, respectively. I highlight this history to show that immigrants are racialized and excluded/included by policy throughout American history. Although I present information in this section about immigrants in general, this history is important because international students are a subgroup of immigrants who have unique characteristics and are perceived as perhaps being more privileged than other immigrant groups. However, international students are also impacted by the unwelcome political environment in terms of their legal status, and the host country's citizens' perceptions of them.

Recently, the United States controls new immigrants through granting visas based on their race, ethnicity, and country of origin. To give a few contemporary examples that seem to support my thesis are: the practice of the Trump administration of refusing immigration from "shithole countries," (Watkins and Phillip 2018) and ending the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program) which is the legal protections granted to people known as "DREAMers" (National Public Radio 2017).

The history of immigration policy helps reveal that race, ethnicity, and geo-political forces have always been at the heart of immigration policy – fear of others as

well as the controlling of particular populations. Immigration policy is created based on ideas about who belongs in this country and who does not. It also changes depending on the trends in a specific period, which influences the direction of immigration policy. This shows that the United States has shaped its population due to national trends, nativist fears, and economic and labor needs. For instance, it includes and excludes people by laws. It divides people by their race, ethnicity, and country of origin, and it becomes a reference idea to judge who is and who is not white and who does and who does not belong in the United States.

These ideas are not unique and are formed socially and systematically through laws, policies and regulations over time. Black, White, Native American, Latino, and Asian immigrants are affected and legalized (or not) by U.S. policy. Even though the U.S. was built by immigrants, not all races and groups are welcomed. Negative attitudes toward immigrations began to appear among the already settled English population in 1753. For instance, Benjamin Franklin warned about the Germans coming to Pennsylvania (Becker 2005, p.2):

> Those who came hither are generally the most stupid of their own nation, and as ignorance is often attended with great credulity, when knavery [dishonest dealing] would mislead it, and with suspicion, when honesty would set it right; and, few of the English understand the German language, and so cannot address them either from press or pulpit, it is almost impossible to remove any prejudices they may entertain. Not being used to liberty, they know not how to make modest use of it.

The statement above shows that the perception of Germans at that moment in time. As President John Adams asked, "Why should we take the bread out of the mouths of our own children and give it to strangers?" (Becker 2005). This statement also

emphasizes that an attitude and a concern about immigration has been intensely engaged at the national level for centuries.

In 1619-20, early groups who came here sought either religious freedom or economic achievement. Others were stripped from their homeland and forced into slavery. White immigrants came from Northern Europe: England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Holland, Germany, France and Scandinavia (Alchin 2018). People in America were diverse in terms of countries of origin. The Naturalization Act of 1790 was created and seen as the first attempt at controlling immigration and the ethnicity of the population. Naturalization was limited to immigrants who were free white persons of "good moral character," and who had lived in the United States for at least two years.

In 1850s, there was also a significant number of Asian immigrants in California, who came seeking to work in the gold mines (Sutori 2018), as well as increasing numbers of Mexican immigrants. During these waves of migration, the federal government again expressed "concerns about the newcomers." The first act that codified an anti-immigrant sentiment was the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. White Californians blamed Chinese immigrants for the declining economy (even though they got paid less and did more dangerous jobs). They came up with the law such as the Foreign Miners Tax (Sutori 2018) in order to control and prevent those Chinese immigrants from taking economic benefit. This shows that political trends or perceptions of the administration at that time allowed American citizens to discriminate against racial others, which may have also caused immigrants to fear or be anxious about their ability to stay in the United States.

Not only have the regulations changed, often administration to administration, the U.S. government also created a strategy or system in order to track all immigrants. For

example, in 1819, shipmasters were required to keep track of all immigrants being transported to the country. Similarly, two centuries later, armed with technological advancements, the U.S. government is tracking nonimmigrants through an internet database. Travelling history is shown on the I-94 form on the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website in order to update travel histories of those who come to the U.S. Visitors have to put their name, date of birth, passport number, and passport country of issuance. The report shows the arrival and departure date (U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2018).

Many laws shape the population of the U.S. Some acts were created specifically for some groups, and some controlled overall populations. The first quota law was a result of concerns over whether the U.S. could continue to absorb such huge numbers of immigrants. This concern led Congress to pass legislature over their racial fears. The Quota Law of 1921 was the first quantitative immigration law which limited the number of immigrants of any nationality who could enter the United States to 3% of the number of foreign-born persons of that nationality who lived in the United States in 1910 (Based on the U.S. Census report).

The Immigration Act of 1924 (the Johnson-Reed Act) set up the "consular control system," which required that visas be obtained abroad from a U.S. consulate before admission, and those seeking to come had to fall in one of visa categories. The 1924 law also established the Border Patrol, since restrictive laws led to large numbers of unauthorized immigrants entering the country (American Immigration Council 2016).

In 1942, following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the government removed Japanese Americans under the Aliens and Enemy Act. They were sent to internment

camps. Additionally, during World War II, the United States and China became allies against the Japanese (Becker 2005). At the time, Japanese were excluded, but Chinese were included. This could confirm that a political relationship influences immigration policies. After World War II, the U.S. was prospering from immigration. A number of refugees who suffered from the war arrived. The U.S. government also designed a more complicated process to screen and qualify people who desired to come, such as a criminal and financial background check. In the same period, immigration laws had also changed due to growing fear of "communist infiltration." There was the passage of the Internal Security Act of 1950 (the McCarran Act) which made membership in communist or totalitarian organizations cause for exclusion, deportation, or denial of naturalization. Indeed, the U.S. was afraid (and still is) of political differences. This points out that different political ideologies (such as supporting communism) also influenced immigration policy. The law also required resident aliens to report their addresses annually and made reading, writing, and speaking English prerequisites for naturalization (Becker 2005).

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, and tried to resolve some of the "problems" created by undocumented and/or unauthorized immigrants. The government tried to control immigrants who desired to have a "sham marriage" for a permanent residence or citizens who agree to marry aliens because of money (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2018). This act, in effect, controlled an immigrant family's life. Moreover, the family-oriented system allowed one legal immigrant to bring many relatives. The Immigration Act of 1990 (IMMACT) welcomed more immigrants based on their skills and education.

Sponsors of the legislation believed that facilitating the admission of higher-skilled immigrants would benefit the economy and increase the United States' competitive edge in attracting the "best and the brightest" in the global labor market (Chishti and Yale-Loehr 2016).

Trends of immigration have changed over time depending on the particular situation, particular fears, and nativist and federal anxieties about who did and who did not belong. Another trend that caused a significant immigration reform was enacted post-September 11th, 2001. Subsequently, concerns grew about a possible terrorist presence in the United States. In response, the federal government—along with many in the public at large—linked immigration screening and enforcement to the protection of national security. Related institutions began to adapt their roles and responsibilities to meet the objectives of the War on Terror (Iyer and Rathod 2011). Adding fuel to this fire of fear of the terrorist "other," the men convicted in the 1993 World Trade Center terrorist bombing had entered the United States on a student visa, dropped out of school, and yet stayed in the country. This heinous act resulted in raising the restriction on international students (Haddal 2008).

Congress created a new position in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and defined the department's primary mission as preventing terrorism and minimizing the impact of terrorist attacks within the United States. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was separated into three components within DHS: The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The result was a tightening of the

process of issuing temporary visas to tourists, business visitors, students, and other foreign nationals (Iyer and Rathod 2011).

In terms of international students, LeBeau (2012) states that the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 served a critical role, as the immigration regulations, for visiting and international students and scholars, profoundly affected student migration to the U.S. Also, the McCarran- Walter Act made international students' visa processing more complex and presented more challenges.

The U.S. is the one of the popular destinations for immigrants, even though throughout history the U.S. has prevented or excluded many groups. However, the U.S. is a very enticing place to migrate, with many opportunities for migrants, and with a very diverse populace. Moreover, it should be noted that the U.S. does do a better job at assimilating its migrants, especially when compared to countries in the EU (Gallagher 2007). But some groups have never been assimilated into the melting pot because they were not allowed in the pot. This is the result of America choosing to either welcome or reject people based on racial/ethnic characteristics and whether or not migrating groups will provide benefits to the country. In terms of international students, they are debated about taking advantage (jobs) from Americans that is confirmed through the "Buy American Hire American Executive Order" (The White House 2017).

In the next section, I introduce my theoretical framework – moral panics and my overall theoretical orientations that helped to answer my research questions. I explore political rhetoric that frames immigrant groups as a whole, and how it affects a sub-group of immigrants: international students.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I discuss my theoretical framework and previous literature on international students. In order to understand the culture of fear and moral panic of the host country and international students' fears, and in order to understand how news media presents international students as well as immigration policy related to these groups as racial others (who come from various ethnicities and countries of origin, and how they become racialized and framed to be "dangerous" groups), I draw on two theoretical orientations, critical race theory and racial formation theory (Bell 1980; Omi and Winant 1994). Lastly, I review the literature on international students and moral panic.

First, I discuss the role of media in terms of creating negative feelings about immigration. The media often frame an immigrant group as a threat to the United States. The media could raise emotions such as fear, anxiety, and concern in the U.S. population about particular groups. These emotions influence citizens' attention and support of immigration reform. Finally, these fears sometimes are materialized in policy and law to control the immigrant groups as well as citizens' perception of immigrants.

Trends of fear relating to immigrants are many: such as fear of terrorists (War on Terror), fear of criminals (War on Crime), fear of destroying a way of life in terms of culture, language and religion, and fear of a potential decline in the economic system (for instance the "Buy American Hire American" executive order). In this chapter, I introduce the concepts of the culture of fear and moral panic in order to talk about the perception of the host country towards international students who are also immigrants. Fear of immigrants, as I mentioned earlier, affects all immigrant groups as unworthy of

membership (Longazel 2012), even though international students have legal status in the United States, they tend to be racialized as others too.

However, more importantly, I emphasize how U.S. political rhetoric can create international students' emotions and concerns based on how they may be affected or perceived due to that same rhetoric. I argue that the "Buy American Hire American" policy and the perception of international students are likely to result in international students experiencing negative emotions. I suggest that regulations and laws contribute to the ways that government disciplines the body as well as affecting emotions. At the federal level, the U.S. government is a moral entrepreneur who creates narratives and laws to control immigrants. The media and its coverage of politics can manipulate emotions, which can result in fear (Altheide 2009).

Moral Panics

I use framework of moral panic to understand the political rhetoric in this era, in both the host country, and fear that international students experience. I acknowledge that the framework focuses primarily on the host country and their fear of immigrants and the social problems they supposedly bring with them.

Fear is an emotion which is a crucial aspect of social reality and is a symptom of modern social life. In this context, the host country's fear of immigrants may be socially constructed by media that use fear narratives, for example, that immigrants desire to disturb every aspect of social life such as safety, jobs, and culture. Fear is meaningful within socio-historical contexts and contributes to secondary emotions like anxiety, hope, shame, and regret (Eller and Doherty forthcoming). Altheide (2009) suggested that the

'fear of . . .' something creates consequences for social relations, which implies a

concern, and it's used for managing social control.

For example, fear of crime and victimization in both local and global contexts

penetrate broader social anxieties that lead to a moral panic (Cohen [1972] 2002; Goode

and Ben Yehuda 1994; Garland 2008). Various media use fear to construct what we

should be fearful of, which sometimes generates political action, and then can be used by

governing bodies to enact policies (Kateb 2004; Sunar 2017). There is a usefulness to

fear when used as a motivator for political action (Altheide 2009).

Altheide draws his argument from Cohen's definition of moral panic. Cohen

([1972] 2002) refers to moral panic to:

> A condition, episode, person or group emerges to become defined as a
> threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized
> and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are
> manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people;
> socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnosis and solutions; ways
> of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then
> disappears, submerges or deteriorates and become visible (p.1).

Altheide (2009) suggests that mass media have used moral panic to alert public

attention to a particular topic. In other words, moral panic is part of the fear of those

media narratives and is an attempt at social control. He also emphasizes mass media are

credited with promoting moral panics and contributing to exaggerated public fears that

support social control efforts and public policy changes. It is the ways of selecting,

organizing and presenting information that shapes audience's assumptions and

preferences for certain kinds of information, as well as creating fear narratives about

individuals and topics. This, in turn, could have an effect on international students'

feelings about whether or not they will be able to work in the host country where they

might be unwelcome. In the context of this research, they may be uncertain of their pathway to stay in the U.S. with OPT or H1-B after graduation.

Moral panic offers a focus and direction for mobilizing fear. This fear leads to trying to stop "social destruction" and promote more social control because it garners the support of the "silent majority" in their perception of an immigrant group as a threat to the nation (Altheide 2009). Some people in the U.S. may not be aware of the immigration discussion before, but they, later, could become fearful of this topic since the president and the media raise their attention. They promote the idea that immigrants are people to fear, because they are taking jobs from Americans. In sum, fear narratives play an essential part in the success of moral panics (Altheide 2009).

However, a moral panic may fail to be successful because of many reasons such as 1) diversity of agencies and interest groups, 2) a comprehensible story which is overt and accessible, and 3) lack a narrative of heroes and villains (Jenkins 2009). First, immigration is a complex topic and relates to many groups of immigrants and governmental agencies. Asserting that immigrants from all countries of origin are a "threat" could be hard because it's irrelevant. Some current U.S. citizens also come from various countries of origin, which makes it unclear as to whom exactly is a threat, taking legal status and physical appearance as considerations. I argue these two conditions allow immigrants to get through the situation, which also means the moral panic could fail to launch. Another issue is that there are many governmental agencies and strategies that control immigrants which could give a sense to the host country population that this problem has already been taken care of. Thus, people may not need to panic over it. The

second and third reasons suggest that a lack good persuasive narrative, which necessarily portrays immigrants as bad people, could make the problem unclear and unbelievable.

Garland (2008) also draws his ideas of moral panics from Cohen ([1972] 2002). Garland argues that panic: 1) is a sudden and excessive feeling of alarm of fear, usually affecting a group of people, and leads to extravagant or injudicious efforts to secure safety, and 2) is fueled by the media who foment stress that is 'sudden and dramatic.' Garland (2008) also noted that "the political uses of moral panic have the mass media as the prime movers and the prime beneficiaries of these episodes. The media engineer moral panics in order to generate news and appeal to the imagination and concerns of the readers" (p.15), which in this research is international students.

How do we know a moral panic when we see one? Goode and Ben Yehuda (1994) suggested five elements of moral panic: concern, hostility, consensus, disproportionality, and volatility. Garland's (2008) added two more features: morality and the assumption of being symptomatic. As mentioned above, moral panics consist of (1) concern, which means a report or event that sparks anxiety, (2) hostility, which refers to a target group as a "folk devil," (3) consensus, which is a negative social reaction that people collectively share, (4) dis-proportionality, which means the threat is exaggerated, (5) volatility, which is a panic event that emerges suddenly (and, likewise, can disappear quickly), (6) morality, which is an agenda that challenges people at the core of their morality or a sense of being threatened, and finally, (7) the assumption of being symptomatic, which means it is a symptom of something larger in a society.

When we look at immigration, some people are painted as folk devils who are powerless to change the perception of themselves in the face of public outrage. They

have difficulty challenging the domination of the host country. They problematize "morals" such as language, culture and religion, as well as seem to take what belongs to American people such as jobs and social services (i.e., health care and education). The host country could feel panicked that they are losing benefits and resources. These fears could prevent them from acknowledging what immigrants may provide to the host country. In other words, panic impedes the ability to have rational thought.

Moreover, moral panics could leave a legacy such as laws and regulations as well as cultural trauma. Laws and regulations help in redrawing a society's moral boundaries, such as how American's panic over drugs resulted in mass incarceration (Garland 2008). Another example is the government's immigration website presents the success of controlling, deportation of immigrants (the folk devils) in vast numbers. This success could ensure citizens that immigrants are problematic and maintain a negative perception on immigration. If a panic ensues, it could fulfill the function of reaffirming society's moral values (Critcher 2008). In terms of cultural trauma, moral panics mark a profound moral event and have lasting cultural consequences, such as racism as well as stereotypes and/or perceptions on social groups. Moral panics are an effective strategy of bringing attention to a topic, but they are often used in a way that is overblown, so the social reaction to the panic involves and focuses upon the actors and agencies that benefit from the exaggerated response (Garland 2008).

In this research, I study moral panic as it impacts international students' emotions, especially the transition period from before graduation to their plans to stay after graduation under their student visa. I'm interested in how news, media, or social interaction may change or cause students' emotions about their experience after

graduation. Regulations on international students restrict them in every stage of holding student visa status. Additionally, this research is also interesting to investigate because each student has unique characteristics in terms of field of study, physical appearances, nationality, race/ethnicity, country of origin, language ability, financial support, and time left before graduation.

Moreover, since international students come from many countries, the United States defines them by race/ethnicity and country of origin, which also attaches with religious belief. When a student comes to the United States, they have to adjust and learn the new culture, society as well as social stratification. Garland's (2008) study of moral panic focuses on exaggerated response and overblown social reactions. However, Longazel (2012) argues that Garland often fails to acknowledge the importance of displaced politics of group relations and status competition. To overcome this deficiency, he suggests viewing moral panic from the context of social stratifications because it will allow researchers to conceptualize *racialized* panics.

According to Longazel, this seems to be more appropriate in terms of acknowledging the existence of perceived racial threats as well as the more urgent attempts to fortify hierarchical structures. The symbolic linkages between drugs, gangs, and dangerous minorities, such as the binary language of "us" and "them" are racially coded. Race drove moral panics that led to increased law enforcement and drug policies (Longazel 2012). Therefore, studying moral panics as symptomatic of social stratification is important in the context of my research.

Critical Race Theory and Racial Formation Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) gives a macro view of how racism is institutionalized in every facet of U.S. society, including policy. CRT claims policy is a tool that includes and excludes people while controlling populations. It decides who does or does not belong in the United States which is then carried out by prejudiced laws, policy changes, cultural rhetoric, and the media. Some groups are welcomed, while some are oppressed. Racial formation theory (RFT), focuses on the ways in which racial categorizations change and transform. As for immigrants, who come to the United States from different countries of origin, learn the racial codes and hierarchy in the United States. They are likely to put and form themselves in those racial categories due to their legal (or undocumented) status as well, which results in a relationship and an interaction between other racial/ethnical groups. I draw from two theoretical orientations in order to understand and analyze the U.S. society more cautiously. These orientations help explain how racial groups are formed and codified by laws (Longazel 2012). Race becomes significant when individuals move from a country with one racial paradigm to a country with another (Rodriguez and Cordero-Guzman 1992). The host country welcomes its current population and oppresses others/newcomers. To put it plainly, it uplifts the majority and demeans 'outsiders.'

In my research, I see using story telling of how immigration policy, which is created based on a racialized idea, affects international students' experiences. It can show how immigration policy constructs and maintains racialized ideologies in the United States. The 'Buy American Hire American Executive Order' also could be understood as

a function of white supremacy to maintain power for the dominant racial group through laws and proposed policies.

CRT explains race as a fluctuating site of complex social meanings that are formed or transformed under constant pressure of political struggle. CRT maintains that race is not independent from law, but rather a legal construction. Simultaneously, law also constructs race, ethnicity, and country of origin. López (2016) emphasizes that law is the most powerful mechanism by which any society creates, defines, and regulates itself. He writes "…the law's construction of whiteness defined and affirmed critical aspects of identity (who is white); of privilege (what benefits accrue to that status); and of property (what legal entitlements arise from that status)" (López 2006). In short, law is racially motivated and is created in order to protect American whites supposed economic opportunities and security/safety from non-white populations as well as citizens from non-citizens - immigrants. For international students, they are enforced through documents or legal status.

The second theoretical orientation that I use in this research is racial formation theory. RFT maintains that race is a socially constructed identity, but that the content and importance of racial categories are determined by social, economic, and political forces. Michel Omi and Howard Winant (1994) define racial formation as the "sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhibited, transformed, and destroyed. It is a process of historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized" (p. 55). Omi and Winant also link racial formation to the evolution of hegemony, the way in which society is organized and ruled. They suggest that "race is part of both social structure and cultural representation…and racial projects

do the ideological 'work' of making these links. It connects what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based on meaning" (p. 56). Racial projects are "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (Omi and Winant 1994:56). An international student could learn the from racial projects and is likely to assimilate with the dominant group.

RFT enables the investigation of race at two significant levels, macro and micro. At the macro level, it focuses on the racial dimensions of social structure such as policy, law, and state activity. This indicates that we should pay attention to state actions in the past and present in order to reveal how those actions have treated people in very different ways according to their race. In this sense, immigration policy portrays international students as others who are a "threat" to Americans in terms of economy (taking jobs) as well as national security (a result of 9/11 event). Moreover, entry visa categories may shape immigrants' long-term socio-economic outcomes in the host country (Lee 2018).

At the micro level, everyday experiences and common-sense dictate people's understanding of race and who belongs or who does not belong. For example, one of the first things we notice about people when we meet them (along with their gender) is their race (Omi and Winant 1994). Analysis of such stereotypes reveals the link between our view of the social structure (institutions, demographics, laws, etc.) and our conception of what race means. It provides cues for how we see people, which leads to how we should act and feel about them. This can lead to ideas of how people's race, ethnicity, or country

of origins deems them as "other," not white, and immigrants who are not worthy of belonging in the U.S., including international students.

In conclusion, belonging to America is conflated with whiteness. Whiteness gives people, politicians, and the U.S. government the ability to exact power over other races and countries of origin. The country successfully achieved whiteness by deliberately and forcefully distinguishing themselves from African Americans, indigenous people, immigrants, and other races (Lee and Bean 2003).

Literature Review

There are five themes in the relevant extant research on the topic of international students. The relevant themes are adjustment within cultural differences, impact of international students to the host country, life after graduation, benefits (or as is being currently discussed, disadvantages) of hiring international students, and finally, the policies that shape these populations. First of all, many researchers study how international students adjust their life in a new environment. This is a first stage that international students have to face. They often have difficulty adjusting (Wang, Ahn, Kim and Lin-siegler 2017; Anderson 2014).

The second theme is how they impact their host country. Research shows that international students bring economic flows in the host country with living expenses, for example they pay three times higher tuition fees than (in-state) citizens. International students contributed roughly $37 billion to the U.S. economy and created or supported more than 450,000 jobs, according to NAFSA estimates (Zong and Batalova 2018). They also provide cultural diversity to the host country (Barta, Chen, Jou, McEnaney, and Fuller 2018; Lobnibe 2009). O'Malley (2017) notes "Maintaining a welcoming policy on

international students is essential to preserving America's role as a centre of technological innovation."

Third, there is a robust literature that examines students' lives after graduation. Many researchers point out how students can seek jobs effectively and sometimes successfully, by developing their self-confidence and learning what a company requires. They may also be involved in internships and transfer knowledge and skills learned in college to the workplace and or in their internship opportunities (Callanan and Benzing 2004; Perrone and Vickers 2003; Knouse, Tanner, and Harris 1999). However, it seems that those opportunities are becoming fewer and fewer for international students. I argue that it is timely and interesting to study international students' lives or their plans after graduation at this particular political moment and juncture because they are affected by the contemporary issue of changing policy. This is important to study and understand because this political rhetoric could change or foreclose their decisions and future plan in searching for internships, training, and/or employment after graduation. In addition, many students choose to change their pathway/visa by marrying citizens. For instance, Kretsedemas (2011) found that more of student visa holders adjusted to legal permanent resident status through marriage to a U.S. citizen than through employment with a US-based, private corporation. Moreover, these literatures also do not study students' pathways under a particular political condition.

The fourth theme looks at the benefits of hiring international students. Hiring international students can benefit a company and the host country because they fill roles for which there are shortages of highly-skilled U.S. workers. International students who gain employment in a host country also benefit their employer because they can speak

multiple languages and have knowledge of foreign culture and customs. The skills that international students can bring to the table, due to their cross-cultural experiences are fresh and creative perspectives and ideas (Ford 2017). International students can also fill the positions that support and assist the U.S. in competing in the global market. This I argue (along with others) that eliminating STEM OPT would hurt both recruitment and employee placement because the supply of H-1B visas is exhausted each year. Without STEM OPT, gaining approval for an H-1B (employment-based visa) would become unlikely because international students could only stay twelve months in OPT status, rather than the three years STEM OPT allows (Anderson 2017).

The last theme is how policy affects international students' lives. Indeed, this research points out that immigration policies affect directly international students' pathways and their ability to do certain things, such as not being allowed to work off campus and having to report when they travel. Lee (2018) suggested that U.S. immigration policy also contributes to the intergenerational transmission of inequalities in the U.S. education system. Entry visas and selection by immigration policy act to stratify people. Immigrants from privileged backgrounds in their origin country often have greater postmigration experiences and transmit these advantages to their children in U.S. For example, and though this is tangentially related, Vietnamese immigrant parents with refugee status are more likely to provide a better education than Mexican immigrant parents with unauthorized status because their legal status is different. Therefore, students' experiences are various depending on how immigration policy limits their educational pathway. This last theme supports my research question of how immigration policies could affect international students' lives after graduation.

Thus, this topic is worthy of study and might benefit future international students, educational institutions, and the general public in terms of understanding the importance of international students to the host country and their experience after graduation, especially in our contemporary moment of political rhetoric and nationalist agendas that seek to limit some immigrants from coming to the U.S. or from being employed in U.S.-based corporations post-graduation and/or post-internship. I see this is a good opportunity to catch the important moment of U.S. immigration policy.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In order to study how students experience the effects of policy, I utilized qualitative methods: interviews, writing ethnographic fieldnotes after each interview, and also weaving in my personal experience. I interviewed s17 international students who volunteered to participate from various fields of study and countries of origin. I gained in-depth information and details through meaningful conversations about the ongoing phenomenon. The essence of students' experiences and the coping strategies that students use to regulate their plans after graduation within specific contexts or conditions surrounding the experience was analyzed through statements, meanings, and themes (Creswell 2013).

Sociological Introspection

International students are documented immigrants who have to follow regulations in order to maintain their statuses. The current political rhetoric directly affects my emotion negatively, especially my pathway after graduation. While I'm writing this research, I'm in my last semester before graduation. Thus, this research is inspired by my experiences and emotional reaction to the "Buy American Hire American" policy as well as other political rhetoric on immigration.

I use my own experience to help understand this particular social situation. This strategy is also called sociological introspection. Introspection is a sociological technique that can allow scholars to examine emotions as a product of the individual processing of meaning as well as socially shared cognitions (Ellis 1991). It permits researchers to prompt and collect our own and other people's stories about the lived details of socially constructed experiences. Therefore, participants' and my experiences together would

hopefully build a fuller picture of these social events. In this chapter, I will start with my personal experience and emotions of holding student status, from becoming to planning after graduation.

I am an international student studying in the midst of all this proposed policy and immigration rhetoric. Immigration policy has changed and will likely affect my pathway after graduation. I have to reconsider my future plans, but it is obviously not only me who is concerned about this policy's impacts. Based on informal conversations with other international students, some are struggling to find a job after their graduation in May 2018. Current research corroborates my fears and the fears of those international students with whom I have spoken.[1] The discussion over immigrants results in my negative feeling about pathway after graduation such as concern and anxiety.

I also plan to do hands-on training after graduation. For me, I see OPT as a great opportunity to apply my knowledge to real-world situations. For example, understanding social problems in the U.S. that I will learn during graduate school could be coupled with my experiences as an outsider to understand how that knowledge can be used to tackle those problems in the U.S. and in my home country. Moreover, advocacy groups and non-profit organizations in the United States are more active, effective, and deliberate than in my country. There are also more support systems and agencies that can help to

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[1] For example, Zong and Batalova (2018) also find that international students have concerns about securing a job in the United States after graduation. Most current students (75 percent) also wish to use OPT and academic training, and a majority, 63 percent, even wished to stay in the U.S. beyond post-completion work training (Loo, Luo, and Ye 2017). Moreover, some students are readjusting their plans after graduation before that time comes. This points out that international students are concerned with changing policy because it affects their future after graduation, especially their ability to work, train, or do an internship.

accelerate solving social problems. Becoming an international student is not an easy process since at the very beginning such as meeting requirements for school and a visa as well as adjustment to the host country in terms of academic teaching style, food, and culture (Wang, Ahn, Kim and Lin-siegler 2017; Anderson 2014).

I am a second-year graduate student from Thailand. I have attended the college since Fall 2017, and I hope to graduate in Summer 2019. This contemporary issue occurred in the middle of my study and will likely affect me until I graduate. I came to United States for the first time in April of 2016 and studied at the language school in Nashville, Tennessee for a year. Back then, I felt there was not highly political rhetoric on immigration as there is now. The language school accepted me into their program and issued the I-20. I used that I-20 for the visa interview. Then, I prepared the required documents for applying to college. I was accepted and was issued my new I-20.

However, I faced some difficulty with international student regulations of renewing my driver's license. Based on my experience, I was issued my first Tennessee driver's license by showing my eligible documents such as a passport, visa, two letters which contain my home address, and my I-20 from the language school which contained the start and end date. The expiration date on international students' driver's licenses are the same date as on I-20. This requirement forces students who are no longer students to suddenly become undocumented. In my case, I had my new I-20 from college before the old one expired, but the start date on my new I-20, which confirms my student status, was not eligible for my driver's license renewal until I attended the new graduate student orientation in August 2017. So, I wasn't able to drive during those months. Attending the orientation required me to provide my I-94, which tracks my travel history in the U.S.

After orientation, students' status is reported to government by the international office through the SEVIS, which intends to track and monitor nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors, and it took roughly a couple of weeks to get into the system at that time. Then, student status is shown in the system and students are able to get their driver's license. I give this example because I aim to indicate that immigration policy has control over all international students and shapes their decision in everyday life and future plans. Of course, this difficulty does not affect only me, but it is likely to affect other international students as well.

For the period towards graduation, my concern and worry over the situation are like those represented in the graph. They are able to increase and decrease easily - volatility (Goode and Ben Yehuda 1994). I don't feel tension all the time but could be stimulated by the media and conversation. However, the time left before graduation seems to result in more anxiety.

Qualitative Interviews

I interviewed seventeen international students from various fields of study (STEM and non-STEM). Participants came from various countries of origin. This is a good representation of the diversity of experience and their surrounding contexts which are likely to influence them individually in terms of decision and life course trajectories, plans, desire, and future opportunities. Therefore, I utilized face-to-face qualitative, in-depth interviews. The interview questions were open-ended and allowed participants to share and talk about their life with candor, which may enable me to build new insights and contribute to empirically showing the implications of CRT and RFT, namely in this

era of "Make America Great Again." The face-to-face informal interview also allowed me to capture participants' feelings about the topic - students' reactions to moral panics.

All interviews took place in the campus library because it was a preferred place and convenient for both participants and for me. It was also interesting that I could easily find many international students work in the library. Most interviews were conducted in the library study rooms. I was able to have a private conversation with them. However, there were also some inconvenience of using those spaces because I misestimated the reserve time for those study rooms. Luckily, my participants didn't mind, and we were able to finish the interviews. Additionally, none of participant withdrawn during the interview. The interviews lasted twenty-five minutes to almost two hours. Some participants were interested in the political rhetoric on immigration, either because their countries were more in the news media and part of current political talk, or it was close to their decision timeframe (graduation).

Participants were either graduate or undergraduate students (F-1 visa) who volunteered to be in this research and there was no compensation. More than half of participants were from connection and snowball approach. The rest came from the help of the international student coordinator, who sent out this research to international student email lists. To be noted that none of them were from the flyers that I put all over campus. I argue that connection, gatekeeper, and snowball are likely to be effective strategy for qualitative research.

I conducted the interviews in English. I found this interesting during the interview because it put the position between participant and researcher. As English is not my or my participants' first language, but whoever has better English ability seems to have

more social capital and sometimes is able to manipulate the conversation. I felt less power and more struggle to reach the same level as more English fluently students, even though they did not necessarily make me feel negatively. However, they were open-mined and patient to me. Finally, they helped me get through the interviews. I also didn't find interviews difficult because every student was able to communicate well, but I admitted that unfamiliar accents of participants slowed me down during the transcribing process significantly.

Positionality

Plans after graduation are various such as OPT, H1-B, pursue another degree, marriage, and overstay (Qin 2017). My research emphasizes pathways of staying documented, especially under the F-1 student visa through OPT and H1-B, which refer to finding job aspect. As immigrants are often seen as taking job from Americans because they plan to work (or stay), therefore the administration raises more regulations and restrictions on job opportunity for immigrants. This proposed policy seems to result in company action, which later could cause the difficulty of finding jobs for students using OPT and H-1B visa to stay in the U.S documented. In turn, I argue there could be less concern and anxiety for students who do not choose this route.

If students plan to find a job with OPT or H-1B, they yield me to study this research as an insider. Studying as an insider allows me to understand the cultural values of the people I study (Kusow 2003) who are minority in the host country. I was able to examine the international student groups in terms of their collective norms, practices, and thoughts because we are affected by the same social policies/proposed social policies. Moreover, my race, Asian, put me as insider with Asian international students, especially

Thai students. However, being an insider may cause an inherent contradiction between community expectations and their role as credible researchers.

As an insider, I surely have the same social status in terms of education as my participants and may experience similar life situations from becoming to the result of immigration policies after graduation. That is, we are in the same boat. This could build trust and confidence that would allow participants to share their insights and information. They could be more comfortable talking to me since I am likely going through the same thing that they are going through. The sense of carefulness and concern about their life situation seemed to open the door to have deep conversations with participants.

Thus, I shared the similar experience of being international students as do my participants. At the same time, I realized I was also an outsider in some sense based on my race, gender, accent, and cultural differences. The degree of "outsiderness" or "insiderness" emerges through a process that links the researcher and the participants in a collaborative process of meaning-making in the particular moment in which the fieldwork takes place (Kusow 2003). On the one hand, interviewing people with different characteristics such as language, culture, gender, and background could cause some difficulty during the interview in terms of how to act in ways that are culturally appropriate and may limit my ability to notice a significant participants' body language while they were sharing their information. I had to consider this cultural sensitivity and I had to be reflexive about how I acted and spoke to participants because it could lead me to unintentionally misinterpret or discriminate against my participants. Additionally, my unique characteristics and knowledge undoubtedly influence interaction and outcomes which could lead me to insights that other researchers would not glean.

In sum, the status characteristics and biographical particularities of both the researcher and the participant(s), and the local conditions changed my position in the research based on who I was interviewing. For example, I am a Buddhist Asian woman who also has an accent. I may seem like an outsider to my participants who have a different religion, gender, race, and better English ability. Therefore, a researcher can be categorically designated as either an insider or an outsider. The research status is something that participants continuously negotiate and locally determine (Kusow 2003).

To give another quick example, sociologists May and Pattillo-McCoy (2000), argue that characteristics of the researcher bring a beneficial understanding of social world. That is, two researchers might be studying the same topic but have different insights. It is not as if one is right and one is wrong, but that there could be two different stories going on. Each researcher, as individual, perceives an event, interview, etc. based on their positionality and their knowledge. Therefore, there is neither one truth, nor one reality, nor one stable social world to observe. In sum, as an international student, with particular characteristics, I would be able to perceive what other people might not see because of my unique positionality.

Data Management and Fieldnotes

I used a digital voice recorder during the interview because it is useful for accurate transcribing and to review information. I also took note of interesting themes or ideas that could lead to new findings as well as capturing a negative feeling of the topic. Taking note of participant's gestures could help analyzing the context. After each interview, I wrote up detailed fieldnotes that described how I felt during the interview, the context where the interview occurred, any body language that I observed, and other

information that I deemed useful (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2005). Participants' name and contact information were asked in case I needed to contact them for additional questions that relate to the research. All the data, such as voice files, word documents, and contact information, were kept on my personal laptop that is secure with an encrypted password that only I can access and were stored at Dr. McKinzie's office, my thesis advisor. The data are protected from other people who do not relate to research. After finishing the research, data will be destroyed in three years.

Data Analysis and Ethics

After transcribing data, I started with initial coding of each participant. I opened to any ideas or themes that come from the interviews in the stage. Then, I ascertained recurring themes and codes that were the most salience and engage in a second round - focused coding. During this whole process, I also wrote analytic memos that helped me to start to write up the results of analysis. This topic has been approved by the institutional review board (see appendix A). The interview started between January to April 2019. Every participant signed the informed consent in order to confirm confidentiality of their identity, details, the risks and benefits of this research.

Talking about personal experiences could cause emotional risks due to proposed policy changes, immigration laws, experiences of missing their families and being homesick, and unexpected plan changes related to undocumented after graduation. The latter issue may raise participants' fear and cause particular emotional discomfort. It is my responsibility to protect participant identity and data for only the purpose of this research. To end, this topic is worthy of study and appears to be especially important in the current context. It also shed light on larger issues relating to the relationship between

immigration policy and international students as well as issues of immigration in the U.S. more broadly.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Demographic Information

Before presenting my findings, I first give a demographic overview of my sample and describe the cultural and social context of Tennessee. The seventeen participants in this research are international students who hold F-1 student visas (See Table 1). The table contains the characteristics of each participant including name (which they agreed to use for the research), age, gender, nationality, race/ethnicity, country of origin, degree they are pursuing, and years in the U.S. as an international student F-1 visa.

The ages of students range from 19 – 40. There are nine female students and seven male students. Students define their races/ethnicities differently, but at the same time, most of them seem to categorize their race/ethnicity following the host country's racial code. For example, Dave (a male Gabon/Cameroonian student) and Titi (a female Nigerian student) define themselves as African and Black, while Hoyan (a female Malaysian student) also defines herself as Chinese and Asian. However, Sahba (a female Iranian student) does not define herself as Middle Eastern, as the host country could categorize her, but identifies as Persian.

In this research, I describe and categorize the students' races/ethnicities by U.S. racial codes. The dominant race of this research is Asian (six students) who are from Thailand, China, India, Nepal, and Malaysia. Four Blacks/Africans are from Kenya, Cameroon, the Bahamas, and Nigeria. There are three Middle Eastern students who are from France, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Three Hispanic students are from Venezuela and Columbia, and finally one white student is from Germany.

There are eight undergraduate students and nine graduate students. Their degrees range from twelve STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematic) students and five non-STEM students. These fields of study allow an F-1 student, both students pursuing bachelor's and master's degrees, to get the time-period of OPT differently. The non-STEM students are allowed to get up to 12 months of OPT, but the STEM students are able to extend up to 36 months of OPT total (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration services 2018). The STEM students in this research are pursuing their bachelor's degrees of Aerospace, Science and Computer Science, Mechatronic Engineer, Audio Production, Basic and Applied Sciences, and for master's degrees of Engineering Management, Information Computer and Information Systems, Science in Chemistry, and Information Systems and Analytics. The non-STEM students who are undergraduates are pursuing Industrial Organization of Psychology and Political Science and the master students are pursuing Sociology, International Affairs, and Finance.

In terms of the number of years in the U.S. as an F-1 visa international student, it ranges from 1998 to 2018. I desire to specifically focus on the period from 2015 (when President Trump was campaigning) to 2018 because this period seems to be a transition period from the previous administration to the current administration for U.S. immigration. According to the ICE's Fiscal Year 2017 report, it shows that there were 33,366 more

Table 1. Demographic Information

No.	Name	Age	Gender	Nationality	Race/Ethnicity	Country of origin	Pursuing degrees	Year in the U.S. with F-1 visa
1	Nakanya	22	Female	Thai	Asian	Thailand	Bachelor of Aerospace (pro-pilot)	2016
2	Patara	25	Male	Thai	Asian	Thailand	Master of Engineering management	2017
3	Xiao Qi	24	Female	Chinese	Asian	China	Master of information computer and information system	2015
4	Rakhi	22	Female	British	Asian	India	Bachelor of Science and computer science	2015
5	Sierra	27	Female	Kenyan	Black	Kenya	Master of Sociology	2018
6	Dave	20	Male	Gabon	African/Black	Cameroon	Bachelor of Mechatronic Engineer (Robotic)	2016
7	Drew	21	Male	Bahamian	Black	The Bahamas	Bachelor of Aerospace (Airport Management)	2016
8	Arya	27	Male	French	Middle Eastern	France	Master of Aerospace (Aviation safety)	2016
9	Hoyan	22	Female	Malaysian	Asian/Chinese	Malaysia	Bachelor of audio production	2016
10	Sahba	22	Female	Iranian	Persian	Iran	Bachelor of industrial organization of psychology	2016 as F-2 2018 as F-1
11	Rocky	30	Male	Nepalese	Asian	Nepal	Master of Science in Chemistry	2017
12	Carolin	20	Female	German	White	Germany	Bachelor of political science (International relations)	2017
13	Maria	26	Female	Columbian	Hispanic	Columbia	Master of International Affairs (International Security and Peace Studies)	2016, 2018
14	Traveler	28	Male	Saudi Arabian	Middle Eastern	Saudi Arabia	Master of Aerospace (Aviator Management)	2016
15	Titi	29	Female	Nigerian	African/Black	Nigeria	Master of Finance	2018
16	Luis	40	Male	Venezuelan	Hispanic	Venezuela	Master of Information systems and analytics (Business Intelligence)	1998, 2002, 2018
17	Sara	19	Female	Venezuelan	Hispanic	Venezuela	Bachelor of Basic and applied sciences (Chemistry)	2014, 2017

administrative arrests in FY 2017 than in FY 2016, representing a 30 percent increase

(U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement 2017).

Some students have held F-1 status several times, interestingly those who are

Hispanic. Some students have been in U.S. multiple times with the other visas such as the

M-1. Arya (a male French Middle Eastern student) got into the flight training program in

Florida for a few months, Drew who came here with a travelling visa a couple times, and

Sahba, who held the F-2 visa, came as a of her husband.

Interestingly, almost all participants, except Patara (a male Thai student) have

some kinds of scholarship and financial assistance from the research setting and students'

governments such as International Merit Scholarships, athletic scholarship, graduate

assistantships, an academic hardship status, or the government agreement for the need for

the degree in their home country. However, family is a primary source of international

students' ability to study in the United States.

Geographic Context

In this section, I start with talking about the particular characteristics of Tennessee

as a background for understanding students' lives in this research setting. Students in this

setting have unique experiences due to the physical geography of Tennessee such as a

car-centric culture. Many international students have a difficulty with public

transportation, and even for getting driver license seems to be hard for them in terms of

providing two letters to prove their living/residency status. Also, the Tennessee weather

seems to be good for students who prefer not to be "cold."

In terms of the cultural atmosphere, Tennessee is mentioned by students in two

important ways. First, Tennessee is viewed as an unwelcoming state for those who are

not local or non-white. That is, Tennessee citizens seem to be conservative. Drew, a male

Bahamian student, says:

> Mov[ing] into Tennessee is like hard because I came from a country where we are more family base[d]… Tennessee is like "we don't mix with that person [if they are different]. You don't mix with that person." So, it's hard for me to like be around people like that.

> Arya, a male French Middle Eastern student, who has also travelled various

places in Tennessee states:

> I would say being a foreign a student in Tennessee… is pretty hard because it's not very diverse. Like, you don't have that many international students here. And we don't have international culture here. So it's gonna be hard for us to adapt ourselves to that society. And also, the society is very hard to want to be open to foreigners.

> Sabha is from Iran. She mentions leaving Tennessee after graduation because

there are not many people from her community in this state. She knows that "there are the

majority of Iranian living in the northern parts, like New York, Pennsylvania, or like,

actually, the majority of them are living in Los Angeles." These places may be her

possible moving destinations in order to reduce her feelings of isolation. Moreover, the

perception of Tennessee as an unwelcoming state can be best explained by Sara (a female

Venezuelan student). She and her friend, who is Korean, were here during the white

supremacist rally, and the white supremacists strongly expressed negative feelings

towards international students. Her and her friend "got a bunch of notes just on our doors

[saying], "get out of the country, and what are you doing here?"

Secondly, students see Tennessee as having less opportunity for them to find jobs

as Rakhi (a female Indian student) who has been in roughly twenty interviews in this

state suggests that "there, there is racism. I'll tell ya. You're in Tennessee. So, they'll

[employers in Tennessee] hire the white person." She thinks that businesses in Tennessee are very localized, such as the First Tennessee Bank, and suggests students to apply to big companies such as Google and HP. She continues "I personally know that this city and the state is not good. You want to go to California…instantly you will have a job. But if you're applying in Tennessee and the South, it's tough."

In sum, Tennessee seems to be unwelcoming to international people in terms of cultural environment, as well as having less opportunity to find a job due to the size of many of the local companies. There are not many big corporations that are able to sponsor international workers financially.

Findings

Throughout the following sections, I often use the words "we" and "us," when I put myself in the particular situations alongside with my participants. For instance, many of the things they told me resonated with my experiences. These shared meanings, concerns, and emotions assisted me in understanding this phenomenon as an insider. I present four sections starting with students' life experiences from the beginning to the final process plans after graduation. These sections allow me to explore ongoing experiences and emotions throughout their life courses as international students as well as their reaction towards political rhetoric. In other words, the following section shows how policy shapes and impacts students' lives. My four findings are: (1) experiences of becoming an international student; (2) maintaining status; (3) experiences of fear and responses to the U.S. moral panic over immigration; and (4) plans after graduation. In each section, I present several subthemes that came up during the course of my research.

Becoming International Students

Before entering into the United States with an F-1 student visa, a student has to be interviewed for their visa. They have to provide the required documents (i.e. I-20, bank statement) as well be prepared for answering questions such as: "where will you go?," "what will you study?," "who will support you financially?," "what do you know about the college and the state you are going to?," and "what do you plan to do after graduation?"

The visa screening process is an important tool for filtering people to find out if they have sufficient resources to study in the U.S. The U.S. wants to make sure that international students will not become a problem to the country both economically and financially. My participants and I understand the purpose of proving those documents and were willing to provide them. We are willing because most of us seek a better educational opportunity and well-being, while some want to leave their country due to their home country's political situation. Still, we might struggle to pay out-of-state tuition (which is also the case for those American students who are not Tennessee residents).

Most participants seem to have a smooth process of the visa interview in English, while some have a difficulty. Dave (a male Gabon student from Cameroon) is the only one of all participants who did not pass the visa interview after five tries without authorities indicating why. All he could do was guess. He suspects it could be his English ability because of his English was not good at that time. He was confident that it was not due to his financial document or I-20 from his creditable English school. Some students were confident of their English ability when they had an interview, and it caused a negative feeling. Xiao Qi, a female Chinese student, admits that:

> …the most difficult part is like at that time, my English is not good. So, it's hard for me to figure out the [DS-160] form, and I also looked for the way to pay fees or something on their website. But they're all in English. So, that's kind of hard, and I was afraid I would be refused by the embassy…

However, my English wasn't good at that time as well. I had an interview in Thai and I was able to pass. I remember that I didn't try to speak English and the interviewer asked me questions in Thai. Thus, the language ability may not be the only important factor of consideration.

The failure of getting visa is a frequent topic that people discuss. Sometimes we guess that it maybe because of the recent immigration policy changes. Titi (a female Nigerian student) knows someone who had the visa interview seven times. She says:

> It's getting harder every time. Yeah, it's getting harder every time, you know, because of the whole immigration, how strong the immigration laws are right now. So, it's getting harder. I was just, you know, blessed that I interviewed once, and I got it. There are a lot of people interviewed [multiple times]. I know someone who had to do the interview seven times.

However, Sara (a female Venezuelan) who has experienced getting the F-1 visa two times (2014 and 2017), suggests a necessary solution for a visa interview: making a good impression. She states "…so we have to make an impression even before we step into the country." In the next section, I outline the particular difficulties that Muslim students face when trying to obtain status.

Political relationships and the perception of Muslim countries

Political relationships and the perception the United States has towards Muslim countries seem to interrupt students' lives, not only for themselves but their family as well. Sabha (a female Iranian student) changed her F-2 visa to the F-1 status while she was in the Tennessee. The Trump administration has made it more difficult to travel and

receive U.S. embassy service. She knows U.S. policy targets her country and tells me that

her changing visa process took a long time and was complicated. She says:

> …because I'm from Iran, and Iran is one of the countries [that has] been
> sanctioned by U.S. … I waited for something around one year and two or three
> months for that thing to be processed… lots of going back and backwards and
> then forward and just yeah, it was a very difficult process…

Sabha also mentions that "there is not any US embassy in Iran. So, we had to go

to Dubai. And yeah, we got our visa, the first visa in Dubai." Moreover, not only her and

her husband had a difficulty of getting visa, but it seems almost impossible for her

parents to visit her in the U.S. with a traveling visa because it's likely to be harder for

people to prove their travel intention (especially countries that are a part of the Muslim

ban). To give an example, from my parents' friend, they had a sufficient money, a tour

company package, as well as a plane ticket. However, they didn't pass the travel visa

interview.

Even though getting a visa seems to be hard for some Muslim students, it's not

always the case. Traveler (a male Saudi Arabian student) who has a Saudi Arabian

government support for his tuitions, a smooth visa interview. In addition, the Muslim ban

seems to portray and allow people to perceive Muslim people negatively. It enforces

extra screening regulations at the airport. Although, Traveler who went thought the visa

process easily, he still had a difficult time during the security process at the airport. He

states that:

> As you know, I'm from Saudi Arabia. The immigration is very strict with us. So,
> the students, because the media or some people in the government believes that
> Saudi people are dangerous. Oh, ok. So, I respect that. It's, it's their opinion, I
> cannot change it. And yeah, so we have some difficulties when we want to enter
> or get into the United States. Like we have to go to their offices to do like, just
> investigation and questions. Yeah, they have investigated me like five times,

Every time I wanted to get into the United States. They discovered [went through] my phone. They checked my social media, apps…

The U.S. sanction on Iran also impacts students' well-being. It limits the right to buy insurance. Sabha points out:

It is tough. (She laughs.) It is difficult. And you need to just because you're limited. Your rights in foreign countries are so limited. And especially if you're like, for me being from Iran. There is always like, for example, one of them is that I cannot take…I cannot buy insurance, health insurance from the insurance companies. Because my, the country that I come from, is sanctioned by [the] U.S.

A negative perception of Muslim people not only allows the host country to act negatively toward them, but non-Muslim students seem to separate themselves and limit their interaction with Muslim students as well. Rakhi, a female Indian student, agrees with the strict regulation on Muslim people because "they create so much trouble. Middle East people will come here, how the 9-11 happened, from student. So, they have valid reasons to be worried." Rules and regulations are based on protecting national security from unfavorable possibilities such as terrorism, sham marriages. Rakhi also adds "because people have done that. The rule is based on it. So, it's because people try to cheat the system, which is why good people like us have to suffer. So, it's understandable…"

However, the negative stereotypes and the strict policy on Muslim countries contribute to misperceptions and a type of cultural trauma for the targeted group. For example, we tend to generalize people into one category, which overlooks their various experiences and the heterogeneity within that country. Sabha, a female Iranian student, suggests that "I'm saying I'm an atheist. It just, I'm talking about what is going on in my mind and my heart…." Although she can't change her religion because "It is an Islamic

law." She also differentiates her country from other Islam nations. She states "I don't call it an [Islamic] nation. Because Iran is just not one of them. Iran is just way so different. It is more Western."

The promises

More than just showing the intention of pursuing an academic degree, an embassy also seeks to figure out if a student will overstay their visa or not to return to their home country. An interviewer at the embassy is likely to test a student's intention by almost trying to trick them. It was seen like "interrogation but they really do their job good" as Drew (a male Bahamian student) experienced it. Even though they are simple questions, they seem to be "very investigating," Arya (a male French Middle Eastern student) suggested. This strategy is likely an effective screening process that scares and tests a student's real intention psychologically, as to whether or not they are likely to abuse their visa.

One of the most important things, besides proof of financial assistance and intention to study, is promising to return to their home countries after finishing the degree or course of study. That is, all international students have to make sure that we sufficiently show that we plan to go back home. Many people have failed to be granted a visa because they seem to show an intention of not retuning back to their home country. Rakh (a female Indian student) confirms that this is very significant and an important thing to say. She has learned from her family members, who are in the tourism business, that "this is confidential information." Her family has applied for visas for their customers many times, and she says:

the biggest mistake people make is, I don't remember some person got rejected for a visa, because she said she would stay here [U.S.]. Best thing to say is you're going to come back. Yes. Yes. Always say you want to come back…

When she had a visa interview, she talked about her plan with the interviewer at the embassy "…so maybe grad school, hopefully, but then I would like to go back home and work for my family. Say that!" She continues "I have never been ever been taught to lie in my life. But, that is the only time that you have to bullshit your way through. Yeah just say you want to come back home."

Likewise, Rocky (a male Nepalese student) also assures that "I have to make them clear is I will return back after my education to my own country. I have to return back to my country. I have to make them sure that I did that." In the next section I show how some students found the process easy and some students found the process to be difficult.

Ease or difficulty of getting visa?

My participants have had varied visa interview experiences. Some had a smooth process while some didn't. I argue that the considered factors are the U.S. policy toward each country of origin, a student's country situation (i.e. Venezuela), and individual preparations (i.e. documents, answering questions, and first impressions).

First of all, the U.S. policy about each country of origin seems to define and apply to people in that country as a whole. By doing that, I argue that the U.S. policy looks over characteristics of each individual. For example, Hoyan (a female Chinese Malaysian) student, is aware of the impact of the Muslim ban on her because her country is also considered a Muslim country, but she differentiates that she is "not."

Carolin, a white female German student, recognizes the perceived superiority of her country of origin, which seems to contribute to the easiness of getting her visa. She states and compares her experience with her Iraqi friend:

> I think for me, it's easier because I'm German, but I feel like if you have another nationality, it could be more difficult. Yeah. Just like my like, my friend is from Baghdad, like Iraq. And I think more she has like a double nationality or whatever. But her parents, like there was no chance they were they going to get a visa, and not even a holiday thing. So yeah, I think being European or being German is like an advantage to go to US.

The second factor is a student's country situation. I argue the situation in a student's country plays an important role of granting visas, such as being from a country like Venezuela. However, both of my Venezuelan participants, Luis and Sara were able to get their student visas in 2018 and 2017, respectively. Finally, among other factors, I argue an individual's preparation is also important for each student in showing their intention to study as well as the "promise" to return to the home country.

In conclusion, I believe that almost all international students are thankful and glad to get their visas. Visas are like a sacred and valuable document that is very difficult to get, and this may lead students to be less likely to abuse them, or to have a negative perception on people who do abuse the document, because they perceive that those who do abuse their visas make it harder for those who don't. The result is that students then differentiate themselves with undocumented immigrants, as they see themselves as contributing more positivity to the U.S.

Maintaining Status

Once a student gets their visa, they must maintain their status, for example, by attending the orientation, attending a full-time academic course each semester, and not

working off campus. During the period of holding a student visa, many students face difficulties in following the requirements and regulations.

In terms of attending the orientation, this event is normally set up by the college international office. All international students are required to attend the event in order to turn in their I-94 and acknowledge the rules and regulations. Failure to attend the orientation could cause a serious problem from the international office. However, Maria (a female Columbian student) who pursues a master's degree of International Affairs had a situation in which she could not attend the orientation because the international office changed the orientation date to a date that was earlier than her flight to the U.S. She negotiated with the international office because changing or buying a new plane ticket was not financially feasible. Due to her knowledge, she thinks the orientation requirement did not make sense for her particular situation. She says:

> … that just got me thinking I'm like, a brilliant analytical and like, there's no way that okay, what if you get stuck at the airport? What if you, I don't know, there's a snowstorm, and you can come from your country, like there are people here that are from so far away. There's no way that you miss orientation, then you just oops! your visa status is cancelled. And by it's doesn't work like that.

After attending the only orientation before the semester starts, students must enroll as a full-time student each semester with 12 credit hours for undergraduates and nine credit hours for graduate students (Office of International Affairs 2019). Patara (a male Thai student) registered for two courses (six credit hours), but the last three credit hours didn't work out. There were only two courses left which had a time conflict with the other two. Thus, he could not enroll, and the international office did not consider him as a full-time student at first. One of the enforcers told him that it is a serious problem and would not allow him to do that. Patara ended up go to another person who is higher

than that enforcer and the situation worked out. He attended two classes in Spring and finishes his last two classes in the Summer.

Maria and Patara's situations show that there is sometimes flexibility for international students to maintain their F-1 visa status, but it depends on how firm the international office enforces and regulates those rules and regulations, and how much knowledge the students have to speak up about their particular situations. Another issue for international students is that their job opportunities are limited, which I explain in the next section.

Job opportunities are limited during the study.

During their study, international students also want to be financially independent. They desire to be able to take care of themselves, at least with their living expenses, or if they should have an emergent financial difficulty during their study. In order to be able to provide for themselves, they can apply for a job. The jobs that international students can do according to regulations are only on-campus jobs working no more than twenty hours per week. This limitation seems to deter the students from being independent and to cope with a financial hardship, which I will discuss more in a following section.

Students deal with finding employment in two ways. First, I examine participants who already have a job on campus, and the second I explore some solutions for international students who cannot find work on campus. First of all, almost all students in this research have on-campus jobs such as library jobs (Dave, Drew, Arya, Hoyan), graduate assistant positions (Xiao Qi, Rakhi, Sierra, Rocky, Maria, Titi, Luis), and other places on campus (Carolin, Sabha, Sara). Nakanya doesn't seem to need it because her

family is able to support her, and Traveler has support from his government in Saudi

Arabia.

Among those who have a job on campus, participants talk about the limitation of

work hours. They also state that the salary is insufficient. Sierra (a female Kenyan student

who works as a graduate assistant, states that "it's not a lot of money you get sometimes

[and] you will [be] broke." Likewise, Sara (a female Venezuelan student) who works in

one of campus buildings, says that "the pay that I get from my student job is not enough

to afford my living expenses. And then I have to ask money from my parents and, you

know, difficult for them too…." Hoyan (a female Malaysian student) who works in the

library, states that "my current job is not contributing much to that." However, it's

interesting that they don't ask to get paid more per hour, but they do ask to work more

hours.

Secondly, it's important to realize not all international students who need jobs are

able to get one. The next solution is to ask for an allowance to work off campus. Some

students talk about 'fairness' and suggest that international students should be allowed to

work off campus because 1) they pay taxes and are documented, and 2) their desire to

work off campus as a side job. Maria (a female Columbian student) suggests:

> I don't think it's fair. I don't think it's fair. I think you should be allowed [to work
> off campus]. As long as you can manage your hours, you know, your strengths
> and your weaknesses. You should be allowed to work. I mean, you're here legally,
> and you're incurring costs, so…and you're paying tax to the system. So, you
> should be allowed to make money too. But I don't know why they didn't let that
> happen, but it's fine. So, I think we should be allowed to work, but I wanna advise
> someone to work illegally, especially if you want to continue to stay here.

Secondly, students desire working off campus as a side job, not a distraction from the original purpose – study and it should be okay for international students to do if there are a lot of available job. For example, Sierra (a female Kenyan student) suggests:

> I mean there are some places like stores, coffee shops and they need people. And they're hiring and I mean that like international students are not so many that you have seen like you take the whole thing.

We emphasize achieving academic goals, and we would like to make our way through our courses of study financially and independently. On the other hand, Patara, a male Thai student, talks about fairness in another direction. He wouldn't say it's unfair because a student is supposed to accept rules and keep up with study. He says:

> we come and take advantages from this country, right? It's not right to say it's not fair. We pay for studying, we can study. We don't pay to come here for working, right? But I would say yes, it causes a hard time. It's hard for working and can't earn money, right? We only spend money.

Moreover, some fields of study, such as pro-pilot, has a high demand of working off campus. Nakanya (a female Thai student) talks about the importance of the required thousand flight hours, in order for her (and other pro-pilot students) to be able to apply for an airline job. One way of gaining the flight hour requirement is being a flight instructor. In her case as an international student, she can only be a flight instructor in the college airport where the flight instructor positions are almost always full. For American pro-pilot students, they could gain this thousand-hour requirement anywhere in the U.S. while she is allowed to do it only on campus. She explains:

> I think working off campus is a big thing for me cause like I am planning to work as a flight instructor while I am during school. I am not sure how difficult is the acceptance rate for instructor for (name of college). But then like if I don't get that job, I can't work anywhere else, and I have to build an hour up to like a thousand hour to be able to work as an airline pilot. So, that's like my biggest concern right now.

In conclusion, I suggest a solution, even though there is less possibility for the administration to change it, otherwise they wouldn't restrict immigrants in the first place. I suggest reforming rules and regulations that allow students to work more than 20 hours on campus and allowing students to work off-campus jobs if they maintain their GPA, which would show that students are able to balance their school and work. The USCIS could change this if say a student maintains at least a 3.0 GPA. They should be allowed to work because this still makes sure that a student follows the purpose of a student visa while they work on the side. However, the downside of this action is limiting an opportunity for some students who have a lower GPA. Additionally, maybe the rules could be adjusted for each field of study as might be appropriate.

Financial difficulty

Even though, international students provide their source of financial support to both the educational institution and the embassy, it doesn't mean that all of us are very rich and don't face financial difficulty. Some people could argue that if a student is not rich enough, they should not come to the United States. I think that negative thought runs counter to people's right to seek a better education, which also contributes to educational inequality not only for international students, but also American students who likewise have to pay higher for out-of-state tuition.

Sara (a female Venezuelan student) has a financial difficulty because of her country's situation. She applied for the economic hardship status. She explains:

> It's a status, economic hardship and all it says is that my parents are having difficulties economically to pay for college and the cost of my living in my current job is not contributing much to that. So instead of paying out-state tuition and being in-state.

This status also allows her to work off campus, but she can't work anyway because she doesn't have a car. Her case shows that there is sometimes a way to cope with international students' economic hardships, if they truly need it. However, in the case of Maria (a female Columbian student), her dad had a stroke and her family had a hard time paying for her tuition. She tried to apply for the economic hardship, but she didn't think she would get it because her country's situation was not as obvious as Venezuela's in terms of a reason to support her need. Some are faced with financial hardship because of the U.S. policy that restricts their home country. Sahba states that "the devaluation of Iranian" affects her as she mentions that "my parents are not able to support [me] financially as they used to."

In conclusion, students have concerns about their living expenses during the study. They ask for a source of income that would be just "enough" for living and making their way through their academic goals because not all international students have a rich family. It would be great for them, if they could have more working hours and places they are allowed to work.

Difficulty with legal documents

In this section, I introduce three important documents that every international student has to obtain. Students must ascertain that these documents are valid. They are a passport, visa, and I-20. These three documents have different expiration dates. The passport works in an identification of a person which normally lasts for five years. Likewise, a student visa is often for five years. However, even though a student still might have some time left on their visa, it can be terminated if the I-20 expires, which

means a student is no longer attend *any* school. The different time frames of these three

documents may cause an international student to have a hard time, especially if they are

from a country that is in conflict with the United States. For example, Luis from

Venezuela admits that he is concerned about the future document situation. First of all, he

applied for an extension of his last year (2018) because it expires in June 2019. He's

heard back from his country, and his visa lasts until 2023, but on top of that he is more

worried about a valid document from his country due to the closing down of "all

Venezuelan embassies in the US." He informs:

> Yeah, so my worry more than the visa itself is more my country's document. And
> what will happen with my situation if my country's document does not get
> renewed. More than the visa itself right now because the visa right now it lasts
> until 2023. But then what? What if I want to continue OPT, or I want to get an
> internship or even a job and when they asked me for a valid document from my
> country that has not been given to me by my country, that's when I work.

I suggest this is maybe why documented immigrants put themselves in the higher

hierarchy or see themselves as deserving to stay in the U.S. than undocumented because

students perceive that they dedicate their energy and resources to it more so than

immigrants who come to the U.S. and abuse the documentation. Now that I have outlined

becoming an international student and maintaining status, I present my findings about

students' fears and experiences of the host country's moral panics.

Experiences of Fear and Moral Panics

In this section, I explore students' emotions that result from the moral panic over

immigration that is currently ongoing. These emotions occur during their holding of F-1

visa status. Some students seem to have a negative feeling regarding the discussion over

immigration. The most memorable discussion that I had with my participants is the

Muslim ban, the restriction on undocumented immigrants, and the Mexican wall (even

with students who don't pay attention to the immigration topic).

A source of these negatives feeling comes from both social media and the news,

and because of conversations with other people. I give these following experiences to be

an example of concern and uncertainty that international students experience. Dave (a

male Gabon Cameroonian student) says:

> I know immigration about people…[they] just come. People come with a paper
> and illegal immigration. And I know that stuff. But I don't know what we are as
> an international student [if] we have problem by [with] that. I have no idea. I have
> no idea.

Likewise, Arya, a male French Middle Eastern student, expresses "Last news I've heard

from my friend is that the students cannot get a green card here. I don't know if it's true

though. If you're on a F-1 student, you cannot get a green card."

International students fear stereotyping of undocumented immigrants

A negative perception of undocumented immigrants seems to allow the host

country to also see international students as "folk devils." They must strictly keep their

documented status, respect the laws and regulations, and differentiate themselves from

undocumented people as well as discourage people not to become undocumented.

Rocky (a male Nepalese student) who works as a GA says "I just don't suggest to

come illegally, to come here as a student and do illegal things. I didn't want to suggest

people to do that. Because it affects other, other legal people." Luis (a male Venezuelan

student) who also works as a GA also raises an important question, "why would

somebody decide to come here legally or to go anywhere legally? Knowing that through

legal means, anything is possible and better."

Similarly, Maria (a female Columbian student) who works as a GA is serious about keeping her documented status and has a negative feeling if she were to lose it. For example, there was a time when she was waiting for the OPT response and her current documents almost become invalid. She expresses "like you have been here illegally. And that freaked me out so much! So I was like, Oh, my God, I don't know what to do." She also seemed offended when "Somebody asked me if I was a dreamer." Although, she doesn't hate them and feels pity for them, she says:

> What Trump did is that he wanted to repeal all this, and he wanted Congress to figure out the situation because their status was actually coming to an end during the Trump administration. And Trump said that he was going to kick out all the dreamers, which all these kids that don't know anything else. You're like, Yeah, I was barely born. I don't know, Mexico, but I've been here since I was one.

Students fear of American agenda and policy

Students mentioned negative emotions about the administration and the President several times in terms of making their lives harder and tougher. For example, I asked Sara (a female Venezuelan student) to compare her experiences of 2014 and 2017 visa interviews. She asserts that "I think it's gotten harder." People often show their unfavorable opinion. Sierra (a female Kenyan student) experienced this and she gives an example that "they say you are a thief." Carolin (a female German student) is also scared of finding a job after she graduates because she thinks the president puts restrictions on everything. Thus, it leads her to feel that it's harder for international students under this administration. She gives an example of her friend who had to go back to England, which she might do it too because the pathway to stay here is hard and the tuitions are expensive while they are free in Germany. She indicates:

…like since Trump is was an office… I just heard that it's super hard to get into that. And even like working after, after you graduate is like, it's kind of like a lottery. Like, not a lot of people get it. And my like, she graduated last year when she was from England, and she tried to stay here and find a job. But she has to go back to England now because she can't find a job… So it's just super hard to get into that and like then keep it and I don't know. That's what kind of scares me that I rather go back to Europe and like, go to university. They are like work there. Because it's not easier.

Additionally, fear of the American agenda could cause students to feel unwelcomed and not belong because we are separated as the "others" or even limited on giving opinions about a particular topic. Sara (a female Venezuelan student) explains:

But yeah, a lot of people once they realize and then they're like, Oh, well, you're not from here like and sometimes you know you want to like, give your opinion about something where you're not from here. You know my history you don't know. Like, oh, political issues, you have no rights whatsoever on giving your opinion on what's going on here.

The role of the media

The media constructs what we should fear. In this case, it contributes to a student's concern of their future in the United States. I agree that news and mass media contribute to the concern of particular topics to particular groups (Altheide 2009). Students receive the information and are often concerned about their pathway to stay in the United States because of the rhetoric around immigration. Interestingly, it doesn't matter if a restriction may or may not be true, but it often impacts many international students' feelings regardless. It becomes a concern in conversation about their uncertain future. Xiao Qi, a female Chinese student, also receives a news from a Chinese channel. She talks about the news:

They said Trump is gonna have a new policy about people who have working visa. The H1-B right? If you wanna apply for green card and something about that. Before if your working visa expires, but you already apply the green card. Even it expired, you can still stay here to wait for your green card. But, he (the

president) is gonna cancel that policy, especially Chinese people and Indian cause they are having a really long line. Cause we have a huge population, so it takes the waiting. Some people, the waiting time is over their working visa. So after that they need to go home, that's why.

Finally, not all students are concerned because of the news rhetoric. Moral panics can fail to lunch because a person has an equivalent choice, has enough information about the topic/situation, or has a sufficient resource to support the pathway such as Carolin, a female German student whose country has an equivalent (or better) educational resources such as an affordable college as she states "it is a lot more cheaper. Like we don't pay, we basically it's for free. Like you don't pay anything for university."

Plans after Graduation

The findings in this section are the main focus of this research. International students who desire to find an internship or a job after graduation seem to be significantly impacted by the policy restriction "Buy America Hire America." This policy could serve as a guideline and agenda for U.S. companies to hire Americans over international students.

I first examine why students desire to have an internship or a job in the United States. We seek an experience in the American workplace. It's undeniable that earning money is an important factor for many international students as well. They also desire to have a better life quality same as other people.

Seeking a job in the U.S. seems to be a huge challenge for international students. It stresses out students in general without even being that concerned about general immigration policy. This is because getting a job in the U.S. includes many hardships and limitations including language ability, paperwork, and sponsorship. Titi (a female

Nigerian student) had been looking for a job since September 2018 to March 2019 and the situation as she states "Is still the same. I feel like it's getting worse every time because I guess it's closer to graduation. I need a job, real quick." It should be noted that a student status/non-immigrant status (temporary visa) is a significant blockage to getting a job. Many students tried and couldn't find a job. For example, Nakanya (a female Thai pro-pilot student) asked the airlines, and all of them do not accept a person who is not U.S. resident. She mentions:

> I talk a lot of airlines, but then they don't really know what OPT is. They don't know how it works. They don't think that their company will accept the OPT student to work with them.

Rakhi (a female Indian student) is confident that without her student status, she could find a job easily because she qualifies for a job in technological sector. She says:

> Oh, I might instantly get the job. If my credentials match what they require. Let's say job web developer, languages, HTML, CSS, JavaScript, knowledge of react. I know all of those things. I could get hired.

Power imbalance

I argue the immigration policy and regulations relating to the international students F-1 visa creates a power imbalance. I see students are in the lower power positions to negotiate their life situations from the beginning to finding pathway to staying in the United States after graduation.

Entering the country is impossible if the embassy doesn't allow it. Attending school and maintaining status with class enrollment are full of rules and regulations. Some student is intimidated if they fail to do so, such as in the case of Patara's class conflict. The international office or enforcer has power over students and are able to prevent them or try to prevent them from abusing regulation.

Applying for an OPT is a situation that the USCIS has more power to say "yes" or "no" and authorize the EAD (Employment Authorization Document) work permit. For finding a job/working visa, students are at the mercy of employers, who have a choice to or not to hire students. Sometimes, they ask for student to pay for all the application fees in order for them to approve students' statuses. However, a student's ability could give them some power in terms of negotiating and attracting an employer to sponsor the working visa.

Finally, the power imbalance between students and relating agencies happen because students don't have enough information about the system and end up following those rules precisely, which seems to benefit the international office/immigration in the college when students might actually have more leeway or ability to bend the rules if they had more knowledge.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

I have five points to make in this discussion. The first point is how policy affects

people's lives. This section speaks to my first research question (How are student's life

experiences (becoming and maintaining status) and life adjustment due to

policy/regulation and political changes? Then, the following discussion point answers the

second research question (How do international students perceive current political

rhetoric? If their perceptions are negative, what contributes to these perceptions?). The

third point is whether or not international students take Americans' jobs. The fourth point

examines an internalization of racial codes and interracial conflict of international

students with other people who are racialized in the context of the United States, and

specifically the state of Tennessee. Finally, I examine the efficiency of using a moral

panic framework to study this phenomenon.

How policy affects people's lives

Immigration policy in the U.S. is often created by the dominant group in order to

regulate white and non-white populations. In this research, I only talk about the

international students who are chosen by their countries of origin and have the class

means at the beginning of the process and their restricted abilities to do certain things due

to their visa rules such as getting a driver license, working off-campus, renting an

apartment, and buying insurance.

When students come to the U.S., they live under different sets of rules from where

they came. These sets of rules give meanings and purposes to newcomers variously

depending on the administration's perception. The CRT suggests that these laws and

regulations, in the United States, seem to be racially/ethnically motivated and are created in order to protect American whites supposed economic opportunities and security/safety from non-white populations as well as citizens from non-citizens - immigrants. The result is the U.S. prevents international students and other immigrants from participating in the U.S. social, economic, and political activity or cannot in the same level. Similarly, RFT indicates, in the macro level, that the immigration policy portrays international students as a "threat" to American society. At the same time, in the micro level, it creates and draws the line between citizens who the U.S. is protecting and non-citizens who are likely to be eliminated such as limiting pathway to stay and deportation. I suggest that the immigration policy is an important aspect of students to consider during the adjustment period as well, not only language, food, and culture (Wang, Ahn, Kim and Lin-siegler 2017; Anderson 2014).

Moreover, I found that seeking an internship effectively not only depends on students' characteristics, connections, and qualifications (Callanan and Benzing 2004; Perrone and Vickers 2003; Knouse, Tanner, and Harris 1999), but it's also based on the limitation of a student's legal status.

How do international students perceive current political rhetoric?

Students receive the immigration rhetoric several ways, such as interactions with the host country, friends (both their home country and other countries), and the media, both news and social media. The immigration policy relating to this group leads to a negative feeling for students because immigrants as a whole are framed as a dangerous group who take over American's jobs.

The contribution of the negative perception about immigration is obvious when the president, as a moral entrepreneur, openly states that particular people are not welcome and are talked about as racial others, or folk devils. He speaks for the American agenda at the national level in order to raise public attention about immigration. His policies, both proposed and enacted could allow American people to think it's okay to discriminate against immigrants, as well as let immigrants as a whole know that they are a part of problem and unwelcomed. For example, even though Sierra (a female Kenyan student) doesn't think of herself as a target group she does feel that the political rhetoric affects her. She says:

> They [the administration] make is up there like the whole immigrants now in the country. So, I mean, it affects everyone if you are not part of it. But you feel it because you are an immigrant.

Altheide (2009) explains that mass media have used moral panics to alert public attention and fear about a particular topic in order to enforce social control towards a particular group, such as international students. Scholars credit mass media with promoting moral panics and contributing to exaggerated public fears that support social control efforts and public policy changes such as the "Buy American Hire America Executive Order."

The negative feeling could lead the current students to be less likely to recommend people to study in the United States because of the difficulty to find jobs and the political rhetoric. For example, Drew (a male Bahamian student) says "…I advise people don't just look at the United States." Likewise, Arya (a male French Middle Eastern student) explains, "I would say that do not have a high expectation from the U.S. anymore. Because this U.S. is very different to [than the] US 10 years ago, or 20 years

ago. Yeah, I would rather go to Canada." When I asked him about whether he has negative feelings towards the situation, he replied "None of them. No! why? U.S. isn't the end of the world. 190 countries in the world, you need to grow up." These examples could help to understand declining new student enrollment as in the previous literature suggested (Haynie 2018).

Taking American jobs

The current discussion of immigrants taking American's jobs or ruining the country economically is not new. Throughout the U.S. history, this topic has been mentioned and concerned in the United States over time. Immigration policies have been used to frame and prevent immigrants from taking advantage of the American society. To recall from the history section, for example, Benjamin Franklin warned about the Germans coming to Pennsylvania in 1750s (Becker 2005), the discussion over Irish immigrants in 1850s, the Foreign Miners Tax 1882 (Sutori 2018), and up until now the "Buy American Hire American" of the current administration.

The definite answer to whether or not international students are taking American jobs is not easy to answer. It seems to be situational and depends on demand and supply in the job market. I suggest examining both sides of the argument. Following the previous reviewed literature, a STEM international student can contribute to the technological sector (Ford 2017). However, an international student could take an American job in a sense that they are more patient with the job because they have no other work choice. Sara (a female Venezuelan student) explains:

> But, I think the reason why sometimes international students or immigrants are preferred over America students is because we, when we come to the United States, we see it as a different thing for us, [it] is like an opportunity to like better

many things in our life--to like gain a, you know, better salary and stuff like that. And I'm not saying some Americans don't have that perspective. But some of them really take it for granted. Some of them don't think about it as "this is an amazing job," you know, take this [you], you know, somewhere. Some of us don't really have a choice. So, sort of like this decision about what this is the job I'm going to do. And from here … if I get fired, I don't know what I'm going to do.

Internalized racial codes and interracial conflict

International students who come from various ethnicities and countries of origin, become racialized and assigned to the existing racial codes by policy, media and social interaction. These racial codes affect how each immigrant group sees themselves. First of all, the policy seems to contribute to the U.S. social/racial hierarchy in the macro level. CRT suggests that racism (or I could apply this to discrimination based on ethnicity) is institutionalized by policy. It is a tool that includes and excludes people in belonging to the United States which is carried out by discriminatory laws, policy changes, cultural rhetoric, and the media (Bell 1980). Immigrants, who come to the United States from different countries of origin, learn the racial codes and hierarchy in the United States. They are likely to transform themselves in those racial categories (Omi and Winant 1994) including their documented status as well, which results in a relationship and an interaction between other racial/ethnic groups. For example, when my participants defined their race/ethnicity, many students defined themselves with ethnicity along with the U.S. racial codes (White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, Middle Eastern) (See Table 1).

It is an interesting finding that a newcomer learns and applies the racial codes of the U.S. to other groups of people, which is unclear in my research how this happens. In the home country, the social hierarchy is often defined much differently. Some are defined by ethnicity and not race. For example, in Thailand, some people have negative

feeling towards Laotians and Burmese. In Germany, Carolin informs me that in her country has a tension "but not against black people. It's more like Russians or Muslims." Many students acknowledge racial codes and adjust themselves to get through a situation, such as a student who looks white and another mixed-white Hispanic talk about keeping silent and not interacting with people, because otherwise the host country citizen's might notice a student's accent and change their perception about that student.

The interracial conflict that occurs between racial groups who are non-white has been underexplored in the literature. In order to understand this concept, I draw from Orbe and Harris (2015)'s conceptualization of interracial conflict. The authors differentiate between "interracial conflict (conflict between members of different races, i.e., African African/Asian American) and interethnic conflict (conflict between members of different ethnic groups, i.e., Cuban Americans/Puerto Rican Americans)" (p.199). These groups have a conflict because the groups have incompatibility of values, expectations, processes, or outcomes between other groups.

For my participants, they are documented immigrants, who have the same values of studying at a U.S. university, an expectation of finishing their degrees, and processes of maintaining documented status. These things can cause conflict against the undocumented immigrants who do not have valid documents. Moreover, among international students, some of them distant themselves from other country of origin, especially the countries that are a target of immigration rhetoric – Muslim country.

I argue that students learn racial codes through social interaction. Dave (a male Gabon/Cameroonian student) learns that his old friend who is white stopped hanging out with him because of the color of his skin. He states, "I have some friend of mine came to

me and said I cannot do stuff with you because one of my family doesn't like black

people or something and I'm just like, fine." Another example is from Titi (a female

Nigerian student). Even though she didn't necessarily show how she learns racial codes,

she indicates that she doesn't put herself in risky situation. She explains:

> No, I haven't [experienced discrimination]. And I think it's because I'm aware of the possibilities. So I didn't put myself in a situation where that can happen. I do not expect some things from some people. So very, I don't get it. I don't get into any kind of funny situations with anyone. So I just try to maintain professional relationships with people, you know. So that just, it's just easy that way.

At the same time, the white German student learns that she has an ability to assimilate

easily in the United States. Carolin hasn't faced with discrimination in the United States.

She says:

> …I feel like it could be like, I since I'm like white and I come from Europe, it's like, it's super easy for me, gives people like I'm the first impression. They don't really like they don't know that I'm not from here. Just when I started speaking, they just they notice. I mean, you always have situations where you like, I don't know, sometimes people are just rude or like they, they think that you don't understand something. And I'm like, I understand. I just…and they just think that you like I don't know, stupid, but yeah, but that's like the only thing like I never. I was never like a serious thing that happened.

> Her statement could tell us that the U.S. is often perceived as country of white.

However, discrimination does not happen only from the top to the bottom of racial

hierarchy, but between non-whites as well. Two Asian student (Nakanya and Rakhi) also

experienced discrimination from black students. Nakanya experienced a female black

student in the food center who ignored to take her order. Rakhi had a weird feeling with

one male black student. She explains:

> …He is African American dude, which is funny. They think everybody else here racist. They are racist. Nothing malicious I could feel like I just didn't want to be in that room or something like that like oh and then you just grab all the people he like, but then that happened in high school too…

Moral panic framework

In this section, I discuss the president's use of immigration rhetoric that has raised and is raising (at least at the writing of this thesis) public attention. However, the administration and public could overlook the other causes of social problems in American society. As Garland (2008) suggested, moral panics should be studied with the assumption of being symptomatic of something else. I argue the fear of immigrants and the panic over these groups are not because they are actually taking Americans' jobs or are likely to take Americans' jobs, but I see them as the symptoms of American society that was built on racialized fears of other people. Moreover, fear of immigration could be a symptom less or lack of an opportunity for American people to access higher education due to rising tuition. In other words, the U.S. may lack educational support system for American students. Thus, international students with an F-1 visa or high skilled worker visa (H1-B) could be a significant competitor to U.S. citizens in the U.S. job market.

Another symptom that I want to discuss is that there are already numerous complicated problems that the country has not been able to solve such as crime, drug use, lack of access to healthcare, and unemployment. Thus, panic over international students and immigration is likely symptomatic of institutionalized racism and other social problems. Although the U.S. seems to not discriminate against black people through discriminatory laws as in the past, but some people may still wish they could.

Conclusion

I argue that the U.S. has constructed a moral panic over immigration and this moral panic impacts international students' emotions, as they are a type of immigrant too. To reiterate my point, as aforementioned, the characteristics of moral panic as Goode and

Ben Yehuda (1994) suggested, are: (1) concern, (2) hostility, (3) consensus, (4) disproportionality, (5) volatility, combined with (6) morality and (7) the assumption of being symptomatic of something else (Garland 2008).

First, current rhetoric on immigration issues and policy raises concerns about international students, even though international students seem to know more about the supposed effect of undocumented immigrants than the OPT or H-1B visas. Students realize and are socialized into the host country's perception of undocumented immigrants. The host country seems to emphasize a divide between "us" and "them," and the international students know their position in the society, as being one rung higher than undocumented immigrants and other racial groups that are disparaged. Despite realizing their status is better than undocumented people, the administration portrays international students as folk devils who intend to take jobs from the population (e.g. the "Buy American Hire American" executive order). In turn, students perceive the administration as a threat to their future and react with negative emotions because international students are the object of panic by way of panic over undocumented immigrants. While many of my participants seem, at least somewhat sympathetic to the plight of undocumented people, they too sometimes have negative attitudes toward them, just as the host country does. Perhaps this is because the policies that would rid the U.S. of undocumented people and dreamers could also affect them.

When people in the U.S. buy into and reinforce this idea, both Americans and international students tend to have a negative reaction and interaction with each other, such as companies not hiring students because of the complicate sponsoring process. In this sense, students cannot really do much because there is an imbalance of power. The

"threat" of international students also seems to be exaggerated, because most of my participants were very specific about following rules, not engaging in crimes, and following the regulations for maintaining legal status. At the same time, the threats from the administration could also be exaggerated. Even though there are news and reformed regulations, the administration may not necessarily reinforce these proposed policies as students think they will. In the case of the current administration, many of President Trump's proposed policies seem to bellicose rhetoric that likely will not come to fruition.

The fear of immigration rhetoric is related to volatility. Students seem not as concern or anxious about the situation *all the time.* It hits them when they discuss it, and then the fear disappears and comes back when they think about it, have conversations about it, or hear and see media stories on these topics. Even still, being unwelcoming to immigrants is an attitude that *should* challenge American people to the core of their values. Nonetheless, immigrants are seen as people who take advantage of the United States and resources away from their citizens. Complicating matters still, some of us are not Christian, don't speak English, but still have the same American values. At the same time, stricter immigration policy is a challenge to the faithfulness of documented immigrants to follow and maintain their legal status. Finally, a student's fear of U.S. immigration policy may be because they are unconfident or not sure if they are capable of achieving their academic and work goals.

I acknowledge that the original framework mostly focuses on moral panic of the national level or larger society which panic often appears in a higher level. However, this intense level of the United States' panic over immigrants impacts students who are also a

type of immigrant. They react to this political environment with negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, and concern.

"It's tough"

"It's tough" seems to be the best description the situation of international students at the moment. The difficulty at every stage of the process of being an international student, especially during this strict immigration policy period, raises concern and negative feelings in international students such as "it's tough," not only for the current students finding a job after graduation, but for new students getting visas as well. However, participants did suggest strategies to pass a visa interview, such as making a good first impression, having well-prepared documents, and being truthful of their academic intention.

For coping strategies to find a job, students suggest finding a connection and standing out as much as they can in order to attract a company to sponsor them. In regard to staying in the U.S. after graduation, some students mentioned coping strategies such as continuing their academic path, either to pursue a higher degree or working in an academic field as a graduate assistant or research assistant, (if students desire to do so).

The famous destination: The United States

Despite all the difficult situations, participants still recommend that other international students should study in the Unites States because the U.S. educational system is one of the best in the world. Degrees from the U.S. are also meaningful and more valuable than degrees in many students' home countries because the U.S. has ample fields of study, a good research environment, accessible materials, and good human resources.

Even though students in this research mention the difficulty of getting a job in the United States, most of them admit that the U.S. seems to have more job opportunities and positions than they would have in their home countries. Students acknowledge that the U.S. job market may be highly competitive, but they are still willing to try to get a U.S. job because they desire to have perhaps a better well-being and income (when they transfer to their currency). Despite the current moment of moral panic over immigration, the United States is still perceived as a great destination for people around the world. Students get a chance to experience a variety of people and learn their cultures in ways that might not be available to them in their home countries.

Returning home

Even though many international students desire to stay in the United States at this moment, some of my participants do not plan to stay for the rest of their lives because the U.S. is not their first home, and their family and close friends are in their countries of origin. (Though the U.S. could be a second home for some people.) To end, most of my participants want to keep their promises to return home, not only their promises to the embassies, but to our families. Many of my participants indicated that even if they did not return to their home countries right away, they planned to eventually do so.

Suggestions for future research and policy implications

This research is very specific to this particular moment in time and the current administration. It might not be as relevant in future administrations, but my research contributes to understanding the experiences and emotions that international students have in this unique and challenging time. However, since racism is institutionalized in the U.S. and since immigration always seems to be a hot-button political issue, my findings

likely will be relevant to other international students who come to the U.S. under other administrations. I suggest that future research use my research as a model to study other interesting political moments in the future. Moreover, the majority of participants in this research have a job on campus. This limits the ability to study international students who do not have a job on campus. They could give insights to those experiences and their opinions of the financial difficulties due to the regulation of not working off-campus.

To end, I suggest future research should be conducted in different settings such as other types of academic institution and other states and regions in order to see whether or not these characteristics impact students' reactions to moral panics that occur in rhetoric and media coverage about immigration.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

IRB
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Office of Research Compliance,
010A Sam Ingram Building,
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
Murfreesboro, TN 37129

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

IRBN001 - EXPEDITED PROTOCOL APPROVAL NOTICE

Tuesday, October 02, 2018

Principal Investigator	**Phattra Marbang** (Student)
Faculty Advisor	Ashleigh McKinzie
Co-Investigators	NONE
Investigator Email(s)	pm3s@mtmail.mtsu.edu; ashleigh.mckinzie@mtsu.edu
Department	Sociology
Protocol Title	***International students and changing policy: Experience, life and plans after graduation***
Protocol ID	**19-2036**

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the **EXPEDITED** mechanism under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110 within the category *(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior*. A summary of the IRB action and other particulars in regard to this protocol application is tabulated below:

IRB Action	**APPROVED for ONE YEAR**		
Date of Expiration	9/30/2019	Date of Approval	10/2/18
Sample Size	15 (FIFTEEN)		
Participant Pool	Primary Classification: **Healthy Adults (18 or older)**		
	Specific Classification: **MTSU international students with F1 visas**		
Exceptions	Idenfiable information for the purpose of conducting the study is permitted		
Restrictions	**1. Mandatory active informed consent; the participants must have access to an official copy of the informed consent document signed by the PI.** **2. Identifiable personal information must not be retained beyond the data processing stage.** **3. Inclusion/exclusion criteria must be followed as proposed.**		
Comments	NONE		

This protocol can be continued for up to THREE years (9/30/2021) by obtaining a continuation approval prior to 9/30/2019. Refer to the following schedule to plan your annual project reports and be aware that you may not receive a separate reminder to complete your continuing reviews. Failure in obtaining an approval for continuation will automatically result in cancellation of this protocol. Moreover, the completion of this study MUST be notified to the Office of Compliance by filing a final report in order to close-out the protocol.

IRBN001   Version 1.3   Revision Date 03.06.2016

Institutional Review Board   Office of Compliance   Middle Tennessee State University

Post-approval Actions

The investigator(s) indicated in this notification should read and abide by all of the post-approval conditions imposed with this approval. Refer to the post-approval guidelines posted in the MTSU IRB's website. Any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918 within 48 hours of the incident. Amendments to this protocol must be approved by the IRB. Inclusion of new researchers must also be approved by the Office of Compliance before they begin to work on the project.

Continuing Review (**Follow the Schedule Below:**)
Submit an annual report to request continuing review by the deadline indicated below and please be aware that REMINDERS WILL NOT BE SENT.

Reporting Period	Requisition Deadline	IRB Comments
First year report	8/31/2019	NOT COMPLETED
Second year report	8/31/2020	NOT COMPLETED
Final report	8/31/2021	NOT COMPLETED

Post-approval Protocol Amendments:
Only two procedural amendment requests will be entertained per year. *In addition, the researchers can request amendments during continuing review. This amendment restriction does not apply to minor changes such as language usage and addition/removal of research personnel. .*

Date	Amendment(s)	IRB Comments
NONE	NONE.	NONE

Other Post-approval Actions:

Date	IRB Action(s)	IRB Comments
NONE	NONE.	NONE

Mandatory Data Storage Requirement: All of the research-related records, which include signed consent forms, investigator information and other documents related to the study, must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the secure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data storage must be maintained for at least three (3) years after study has been closed. Subsequent to closing the protocol, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity.

IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University

Quick Links:
> Click here for a detailed list of the post-approval responsibilities.
> More information on expedited procedures can be found here.

Research Participants Needed

Study Title: International Students and Changing Policy: Experience, Life, and Plans after Graduation
Protocol ID YY-X### **Approval** 09/28/2018 **Expiration** 09/30/2021

Study Description & Purpose

This study desires to find how social policies affect to international students. If the policies would cancel the OPT (Optional Practical Training), which provide a chance for international students to find a job and gain experience after graduation. What would international students plan to do?

Target Population

I am looking for international students from various county of origins, and both genders are needed.

Risk & Benefits

Participants would share personal experiences and plans after graduation which could cause an emotional risk. However, your opinions will provide benefits to other international students, and society as a whole, in terms of pointing out how social policies affect you. Moreover, your experiences could inspire educational institutions to help future international students.

Additional Information

This research is calling for volunteers and I hope to have your valuable experiences. However, participants can withdraw from the research anytime freely without panalty. You will also be asked to provide names or ideas about other contacts who may want to participate in the study.

Where? Library at MTSU Time? At your convenience for flexibility.

Contact Information

Phattra Marbang, Graduate student, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 629-999-0112, and pm3s@mtmail.mtsu.edu
Faculty Advisor contact if PI is a student (Dr. Ashleigh E. McKinzie, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Ashleigh.McKinzie@mtsu.edu)

Institutional Review Board, Middle Tennessee State University
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd, Room 010A, Murfreesboro, TN 37132
Tel 615 494 8918 | Email: irb_information@mtsu.edu | www.mtsu.edu/irb

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

<u>Beginning Script</u>

Hello, I want to start by thanking you for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. I know that our lives are super busy. Thus, I really appreciate your time. I also want to let you know that if at any time during the interview, you feel emotional or you need to take a break, just let me know. I am happy to take a break if you want to do so. Also, I must tell you that if, at any time, you want to stop the interview, and/or you no longer want to be a part of my research, that is your right as a research participant. So, if it is okay, we can go ahead and get started. Do you have any questions for me before I start asking the interview questions?

<u>Interview Questions</u>

Demographics

1. Age
2. Nationality
3. Race/Ethnicity
4. Country of Origin
5. Gender
6. Social class
7. Years in the U.S.

Overview

1. I want to start with a broad question: why did you choose to be interviewed for this project? What I mean is what it is about your story/experiences that you think might be important for this project?
2. I would like to know a little bit about your family. What is your family situation? PROBE: What I mean is how do they support you? What is your family's educational level? What is your relationship with your family like?
3. What degree are you pursuing and why?
4. How long have you lived in the U.S.? Do you have relatives in the U.S.?
5. How did you become an international student in U.S., and why do you continue in higher education? (PROBE: If some started with English high school)
6. Why do you choose to study in U.S.? PROBE: What is the most important reason/expectation for studying in U.S.?

Getting Student Visa

7. Can you walk me through the entire experience of getting your visa?

8. Is there any specific documentation that you had to provide when you had your visa interview? PROBE: What do you think is the most difficult part of getting a visa?

Keeping status

9. How do you feel about being an international student?
10. What situation can cause a hard time in your life? (i.e. financial problems) PROBE: Have you experienced any inconveniences with keeping your student status? (i.e. getting driver license, transferring school)
11. What rules or regulations do you feel make you have a hard time while you are a student? (i.e. cannot work out off campus)
12. When you have any problems related with the visa, who do you ask for help? How they help you and how satisfied are you?

Experiences of Discrimination

13. I would like to switch a different topic, if that is okay. I am also interested in whether international students experience discrimination. Have you experienced discrimination?
14. Are you aware of current political discussions about immigration here in the U.S.? If so, how do those discussions make you feel?
15. Do you know about any immigration policies involving student visas that may affect you? PROBE: are there any proposed policy changes relating to immigration that make you feel a little nervous or anxious about being an international student?
16. Have you read a news about student visas and their effect on international students? If yes, what have you read/heard?
17. Do you know about OPT? If so, what have you heard about it?

Solving problems

18. What is your plan after graduation?
19. Would you recommend people to study in U.S.? Why or Why not? PROBE: is there less opportunity to find a job then in other countries?

Conclusion

20. Thank you so much taking the time to speak with me today. To close, is there anything I did not ask that I should have? What else would you like to tell me?