Projected to reach one million people next year, international students in the United States are undergoing a transformative educational migration. Moving away from the existing study abroad paradigm is the first step to more accurately understand the lived experience of an educational migrant. Discovering the perceptions of what value an American education holds and accomplishes for students back home is central to revealing the major conditions and influences both propelling educational migration, the experience, and the course, features, and impacts of reentry migration. What prompts students to engage in this risky transformative activity? How can U.S. academic institutions better adapt to the international student experience by adapting a lens of migration? What is the role of cultural capital acquired while abroad in the process of reentry migration? Is the reentry process facilitated by the educational objectives obtained in the U.S?

This study examines the lived experience of South Korea and Saudi Arabians as a window into the lives of international students as educational migrants. Acquiring cultural capital - the personal resources and assets an individual uses to negotiate their social environment - abroad is perceived as a way to better navigate the conditions of economic precarity. However, what
unfolds is a significant transformative experience in the interstices of liminal spaces abroad that often results into a liminal condition upon reentry migration. The role of cultural capital acquired from the educational migration process has a stronger influence than the actual educational achievements obtained.

This research seeks to work towards an anthropology of higher education, bringing the topic of student mobility into an anthropological frame in order to expand scholarship and inform educational curriculum and policy affecting the international student experience.
International Students as Educational Migrants: East and Southwest Asian Perspectives

by

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Lauren A. Visconti, Author
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Chapter 1

My Interest

I have been interested in Saudi Arabia since I was a child listening to my father’s stories about heat so hot that the asphalt would melt into a sticky substance that children chewed as gum. Or why my grandfather had invested in leaving Italy for the United States only to quickly turn to a job in the eastern oil fields in Saudi Arabia where he stayed for 17 years, raising a family. These imaginaries turned into a much starker reality after two planes flew into my hometown in 2001. As I watched the smoke pour across the Hudson River, I instantly feared the United States response to the atrocity. More than just the addition to the American lexicon or even the Patriot Act, 9-11 is an event that changed the course of world history as is evident from the history of the present. However, today, more Americans are likely to cite that these terrorist attacks were an inside-job than they are to point the finger at Saudi Arabia and yet, Muslims and Muslim Americans (48%) are more likely than Americans of any other minority in the United States to say they, personally, have experienced racial or religious discrimination in the past year.

Saudi Arabia had always sparked my interest as I mentioned, but it was not until I saw a complete reversal of the composition of my classroom change that I began to interact

1 (http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/153641/BRIEF-ENGLISH-Islamophobia-Understanding-Anti-Muslim-Sentiment-West.aspx)
2 Formerly, I was an Instructor in the Linguistics department at Dominican University of California as well as the Senior Instructor at a private language school in Santa Cruz, California. Although I have worked with EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students
with Saudi Arabians on a daily basis, influencing my thoughts and shaping my knowledge. What was once a multicultural classroom representing, on average, at least ten different countries, quickly turned into a bicultural classroom directly after the onslaught of the global financial crisis in 2008. By the beginning of 2009, my classroom consisted of Chinese men on one side of the room and Saudi Arabian men on the other side of the room, with a few Chinese women and Saudi Arabian women adhering to “their side”, but filling in the minimal middle seats. My Master’s thesis in Linguistics/TEFL was entitled, “Adaptive Pedagogies in a Global Locality: The Economic Crisis and the Classroom,” thus addressing this global shift in power and how to pedagogically adapt from a multicultural classroom to a biculturalism. Utilizing anthropological tools and listening to the focusing on engaged pedagogy that is heavily situated in political economy allowed me to explore how to understand, and therefore, adapt, to a shifting classroom as a localized space that has been heavily influenced by the remorseless ruptures of global neoliberalism.

Pilot Research

As my former students became close friends coupled with being able to observe the unfolding ‘international student’ transition to the United States alerted me to understand

3 One devastating and overlooked aspect of the global financial crisis was the exacerbation of the already uneven geography of gender. From 2007 through 2012, I watched less and less women migrate for educational purposes. The gendered dimension of the financial crisis has been extensively documented by the United Nations and the International Labor Organization as well as independent scholars (see Antonopoulos 2009).
the phenomenon as less of a transition and much more of an unfolding migratory process. However, across college campuses in the U.S, including higher education research, the people are most commonly referred to as ‘international students’ and their movement is referred to as ‘study abroad’.

Problematizing and unpacking these terms is the first step to accurately conceptualizing this dynamic phenomenon. It is also important to note that the labels that are applied shape the ontology and epistemology guiding not only the public imagination, but also all policy decisions on the local level of university campuses across the United States.

In order to accurately assess and measure my observations of working intimately with this diverse population, I decided to create and digitally send a simple semantic differential scale to a randomized sample of two hundred former students in order to allow them to situate their own experiences more accurately. Initially acting as more of a triangulation technique, this proved to be useful in opening up a larger space for research: theorizing the nascent space that this population occupies as perceived from an emic perspective.

The results from one hundred and thirty four respondents (n=134) reaffirmed my observational notions that international students do not in any way perceive themselves as

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4 This is what a response rate looks like when an existing relationship has been established with respondents!
tourists. Scoring an average of *6.24, indicates that an increasingly large number of young men and women are transforming their identities within the context of global mobility, seeing themselves as neither tourists nor precisely migrants, but occupying a nascent and underexplored cultural space. One purpose of this research - to explore this space - was established after the results from this piloted semantic differential scale were recorded and analyzed.

*Transnational Educational Migration*

In the human condition it is clear that a need for both place and space exists. Stretched conceptions of the complicated concept of “home” may occur, but it is important to emphasize migrants’ need for roots and to criticize an approach where a rhizomatic – always on route to nowhere – approach has been too often applied to the diaspora condition. Migration is a subjective form of movement and it depends on the lived experience of the movement. Although the average international student in my study lived in seven different houses in the U.S, the actual movement varies with some traveling as little as one or two days. The importance is to not focus on the movement, but on the significance it has on the individual (Hage 2005:470).

All participants in this study contributed in uncovering the gray - often liminal - space that engenders the dynamic subjectivities of ‘international students’. The term, ‘international students’, I argue, acts as a signifier that only contributes to and exacerbates the inaccurate depictions of a large and incredibly diverse population in the United States in both the academy, the imagination of the public, as well as dynamic yet
often internalized images ‘international students’ have of themselves. The various dimensions in which the label “international student”, as the mobility is experienced today, no longer accurately describes how people perceive themselves, their movement across borders, their purposes and motivations, aspirations and hopes, experiences on campus and in the United States, and the shifting subjectivities that can only be best described through the lens of transnational migration. When the average student stays in the U.S for five to seven years (Open Doors 2011), it is necessary to redefine what constitutes “study abroad” - a model that the United States education system has projected onto this burgeoning population. This research has uncovered that ‘international students’ are better characterized as *transnational educational migrants* undergoing a *transnational educational migration*. For the purposes of this research, however, the terms “international student” and [transnational] educational migrant will be utilized interchangeably for purposes of clarity.

**Key Purpose**

The phrase “student mobility” in the United States refers to the phenomenon of students changing schools for reasons other than grade promotion⁵. The rest of the world uses the term to refer to students who are mobile - the majority of which are in the act of crossing international borders. The ERASMUS programme⁶ in the European Union, for example, is one of student mobility; however, there are significant differences than that of student

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⁶ *European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students*
This project proposes a deeper look at student mobilities in the United States through the lens of transnational migration rather than the existing predominant pattern of study abroad. “Studying abroad” represents the primary model in which U.S college students engage in an excursion, typically that of language learning and a brief introduction to area studies that lasts no longer than three months. However, this is precisely the epistemological orientation in which the United States has accommodated the now one million students\(^7\) studying in the United States, a number representing unprecedented growth, falls short in both explaining and accommodating the actual international student experience.

This research uncovers the acute need in which to perceive international students through a new lens; to listen to the very voices undergoing the lived experience revealing that the entire educational paradigm needs to shift from the concept of visitation to that of a migration. The term “migrant” has been extremely racialized in the United States as merely crossing the border into the United States from Mexico typically constitutes an act of migration, despite the length of time spent in the United States. However, international students are typically perceived as an elite class of consumers and future entrepreneurs.

that contribute to the movement of global capital. This renders the movement justified in an era of global neoliberal capitalism.

However, all people engaged in migratory movement are seeking to improve the quality of their lives and international students often spend a longer period of time in the United States than more than half of the labor migrant population. Despite the political discourse of legality - a very complicated set of procedures that all migrants tend to fluidly fall in and out of with international students being no exception - international students, on many levels, are undergoing a transformative educational migration. This is a new way to approach the topic of student mobilities and this research seeks to shift the educational paradigm to include a new epistemological frame based on a more holistic perspective, contribute to existing gaps in both theory and the general literature, and provide policy recommendations that will better accommodate international students.

Additionally, and unique to this project, is the central role of return migration. Return migration is central to understanding and assessing the variations and singularities of how cultural capital functions in diverse contexts as well as the lived experience. This study seeks to not only foreground an exclusively local case study of the intersections of twenty-four people’s education-migration experience as it unfolded in the United States. However, it should be mentioned that although only twenty-four people were interviewed for this project, over the last decade, I have taught over 8,600 international students and

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have interacted with many more. These observations have greatly shaped this research, blurring the lines between formal and informal research\textsuperscript{10}. This study intends to update research in the United States as the United Kingdom, Australia, Belgium, and New Zealand have taken the lead in generating research on the education-migration nexus, internationalization of education, and student mobility.

Each student brought their own unique story to the table and no story was ever the same. Some had traveled internationally before as did their fathers\textsuperscript{11}. Some had never left their small tribal hometowns, not ever having traveled to any capital city in the world. Some young men explained that the largest obstacle they faced was the upkeep of daily life, such as learning how to do laundry, clean their bathrooms, or feed themselves – quotidian chores that were never before conceived of until away from parents. Some fell in love with the culture and lifestyle, some were disconcerted with what they encountered and counted down the years and days they could fast-track a degree to get out. Many felt free of kinship obligations for the first time and many became first time parents while living in the United States, extending the concept of transnational families. As far as student identities are concerned, the people in this study are chemists, engineers, economists, lawyers, accountants, political scientists, physicists, financial advisors, and criminal justice experts. Some of them strongly identify with these labels and others have simply followed the career steps that their family and government trajectories have laid out for them. It is here that a qualitative approach elicits the unique diversity of experiences and

\textsuperscript{10} For further discussion on this, refer to Chapter 3: Methods & Methodology.

\textsuperscript{11} It was very clear that no one had mothers who had studied internationally.
narratives, breaking down the limited framings of the schisms created by both the media and the public imagination that too often fractures the educational migrant into either the elite, ‘designer migrants’ who do not warrant institutional support or as people who disingenuously exploit their ability to move for an education to advance themselves. The last commonplace perspective that characterizes both professionals in the academy and the public imagination is to view international students as exploited themselves by an unscrupulous educational industry devoid of education. The truth is there simply is no single narrative and the stories exist on a messy spectrum. Lastly, it is important to note that all international students tend to be framed by the most statistically prominent nationality – Chinese. In an attempt to further diversify the frame and create a realistic portrayal of the educational migrant, people from South Korea and Saudi Arabia – two of the top four nationalities – were chosen for this study\(^\text{12}\) (IIE, 2012).

The research questions for this study are as follows: 1) Who are international students? 2) What prompts students to engage in this risky transformative activity? 3) What is the experience of an American campus? 4) Is the reentry process facilitated by the educational objectives obtained in the U.S? 5) How does the role of acquired cultural capital facilitate return migration? The first question is seemingly basic, setting a foundation in which to move forward revealing that is it not a simple question at all. Discovering the perceptions of mobility, ranging from the lived experience of migration to what value a U.S education holds and accomplishes for students are central to

\(^{12}\) See Appendix A for a biographical profile of each person that contributed to this study.
revealing the major conditions and influences both propelling educational migration and the course, features, and impacts of reentry migration.

The purpose of this study seeks to examine these questions utilizing systematic qualitative ethnographic methods in order to capture the student voice, bringing forth the individual nuances of the lived experience of educational migration. Furthermore, the proposed project will examine the role and impact of acquired cultural capital abroad in the context of propelling mobility and return migration. Cultural capital - the personal resources and assets an individual uses to negotiate their social environment - is highly influential in uncovering the impetus and outcomes of student mobility (Waters 2008).

The participants in this study are from divergent backgrounds, Saudi Arabia and South Korea. South Korean students represent the third largest group in the U.S (Open Doors 2012). The Institute of International Education (IIE) reports that Saudi Arabian students, now the fifth largest sending country, had a double-digit increase of 25% in just the last three years (ibid 2012). The King Abdullah Scholarship Initiative has extended the contracts with English language schools in the United States, reflecting their future investment of sending students to the U.S (IIE 2012). Focusing specifically on these two countries will allow for generalized extrapolations to be made about the role of a U.S higher education and cultural capital among the one million international students in the U.S.
All participants in this study are former ESL students who attended classes at one of two schools in San Francisco and Santa Cruz, California where I taught for seven years. The longest relationship between the researcher and participant is six years and the shortest is three years. My majors, anthropology and psychology in my undergraduate degree and experience teaching abroad in both Japan and South Korea has facilitated my understanding of this project. Having this background shaped my daily interactions with international students; my pre-fieldwork job has provided me with extensive experience with the educational migration process, allowing me to foster friendships that will facilitate deep insights and unique perspectives on both the international educational migration experience and the reentry process. All participants are fluent in the English language as they have either obtained a higher educational degree or are in the last year of their undergraduate and graduate programs in American universities across the country.

Patterns in the heterogeneous narrative emerged. This study investigates these patterns, seeking to add new threads to existing research on transnationalism and transborder migration providing empirical anthropological insights into the student experience. Adeptly, there have been new calls for scholarly research to blur the boundaries around different categories of migrants (Castles 2002) and this study hopes to provide a new framework from which to reconceptualize the burgeoning international population on campuses and in towns and cities across the world.

Limitations
First and foremost, I do not speak Arabic or Korean. Although all participants in the study are fluent in English, the vocabulary words that I do know in both languages significantly helped the focus groups and the interviews, which serves as a reminder of a language barrier. Another limitation to this study depends on valuation of what constitutes sound methods in social science research. As examined in Chapter three, I knew all participants in this study. After sampling techniques were randomized and differentiated based on nationality, gender, and location in the U.S, I emailed a long list of potential participants and the people who responded participated in this study. Then, while in New York, one of the people that had been chosen for this study extended his vacation. I called another person whom I knew was living in the area. A similar situation occurred in San Francisco. In addition to these two scenarios, it was obvious from the moment I received the first couple of email responses that the deeper the friend connection, the more likely the person would opt to participate. This was absolutely the case, which invited scientific bias. Scientific rigor, however, was never the objective of this project. The sample size (n=24) is insufficient enough to generalize the results. External validity, instead, was built though measuring the research methods of years of observation. Additionally, the reflexivity of the researcher was a top priority throughout the research process.

The lack of literature on the topic of student mobilities and migration also created an exploratory rather than explanatory model of research. Despite the systematic coding and grounded theory that uncovered findings, the theoretical frameworks employed represent a very nascent attempt of conceptualizing and situating international students in a
migratory lens of transnationalism and transborder migration. The precise contribution of this research could be perceived as both a strength and a weakness.
Chapter 2: Brief Review of the Literature.

Projected to reach one million people next year, international students in the United States are contributing $22.7 billion annually to the U.S. economy and much growth is anticipated (IIE, 2012). Students from all over the world are traveling en masse seeking higher education outside their national boundaries that will enable them to better navigate increasingly difficult economic landscapes at home. This student movement now accounts for the fastest growth in international migration, increasing 70% between 2000 and 2008 (Raghuram 2012). Future projections of this emerging trend are stated to continually increase primarily due to students from East Asia and the Middle East (Findlay et al. 2012). Despite these projections, the rising phenomenon of people crossing international borders on educational visas is one that the social sciences continue to grapple with (ibid 2012) and the literature is sparse. Wedged between education and migration, international student mobilities have not been adequately addressed and rarely has the student voice been captured (Murphy-Lejeune 2010). The theoretical frameworks put forth remain inadequate to account for the complexities that characterize transnational education and the international student experience (Kell & Vogl 2008, Waters 2008, Brooks and Waters 2012).

Despite the growth of this international movement, there are four books that address student mobilities from a rigorous social science perspective; however, none of the literature focuses on the United States, but rather scholars in Australia (Robinson 2013), the U.K (Murphy-Lejeune 2002) and Canada (Waters 2008). Shanthi Robinson (2013)
recognized the importance of viewing the international students in her classroom not just as sojourners who had temporarily traveled to Australia, but rather what she called, “potential migrants who were in the early stages of a complex and relatively new type of migration pathway”, representing a new trend of migration that includes mobility rather than the historically shaped, now obsolete mode of ‘settler migration’ that is still dominant in the literature.

Geography departments from the U.K, Canada, and Australia have recently generated the majority of the literature on international student mobilities starting with Johanna Waters' research about the intersections of migration, education, and cultural capital. This was the first publication of its kind to conceptualize students as people who were propelled to undergo educational migration as a strategy to reproduce or acquire a desired class status. Previous literature until this point focused primarily on a new yet static student body with strategies for “assimilation” into “host cultures”, reflecting earlier migration literature. Wedged between education and migration, international student mobilities literature remains sparse, inadequately addressed, and rarely has the student voice been captured (Murphy-Lejeune 2010). The theoretical frameworks put forth remain inadequate to account for the complexities that characterize transnational education and the international student experience (Kell & Vogl 2008, Waters 2008, Brooks and Waters 2012). For instance, market analysis of movement dominates the ideological underpinnings of literature, ignoring the socially embedded individual determinants (Haines 2013) that are necessary to contextualize and comprehend the broader social movement.
With the average international students spending five years in the U.S (Open Doors, 2010), this period of time coupled with varying stages of integration into the American educational system begs to situate the international student experience by bridging the disconnected literature of migration and education. An increasingly large number of young men and women develop their identities within the context of global mobility, seeing themselves as neither tourists nor immigrants, but occupying an entirely new cultural space. This nascent space is under-examined and under-theorized in anthropology and has only been recently addressed by cultural geographers in the U.K (Brooks & Waters 2012, Waters et al. 2011, King & Raghuram 2013), foreign languages in Ireland (Murphy-Lejeune 2010) and education in Australia (Kell 2010, Kell & Vogl 2008). Anthropological tools, however, are well-equipped for the topic of international student mobilities as they can transpierce this emerging phenomenon and contribute the larger discourse of the current episteme in which mobility is more the norm rather than the exception (Appadurai 1996, Ong 2006).

The largest lacuna in the literature is the return migration of international students (Baláž & Wallace 2004). An ethnographic context of return migration is crucial to understanding not only the transformative educational migration (Hazen & Alberts 2006), but also the nuances of cultural capital acquired and outcomes of U.S higher education. Cultural capital illustrates that the scholastic investments are a minute portion of the overall educational strategies (1986: 244). In other words, student move transnationally for a much wider variety of reasons than economic investments and yet this is absent from the
literature with the exceptions of a few more comprehensive studies (See Fong 2011, Manami 2000, Waters 2008).

The experience of return migration is far from uniform and mediated by a wide range of social factors. Investigating the return migration process uncovers both conditions propelling the mobility and the lived experience, as well as the variability of acquired cultural capital and its effects. Without examining return migration, the role of cultural capital remains a theory, rather than an empirical study and yet this is the most frequently cited reason for educationally migrating (Fong 2011).

A neoliberal thread can be traced in creating the impetus for educational migration in both South Korea (Lim & Jang 2006) and Saudi Arabia (Guazzone & Pioppi 2009), two of the top five sending countries of students to the U.S (Open Doors 2012). South Korean and Saudi Arabian students are highly cognizant and reflexive about their place in a larger global system and yet, the literature on international students does not include their perspective. Foregrounding the embodied nature of student mobility, including the physical and emotional aspects of this mobility is crucial to addressing the phenomenon (Brooks & Waters 2012) and the perspective of an anthropological approach is “desperately needed” (Haines 2013: 22) as the “student voice is absent” (Murphy-Lejeune 2010: 53).

Mobility is stimulated by the increasingly global and interdependent nature of many political and economic systems, but also by the ‘social imaginaries’ of individuals
(Appadurai 1996, 2000) and “subjective awareness of global opportunities” (Rizvi 2009: 269). According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), international students are defined as those “who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purposes of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin.” An annual report published by UIS reveals that the global mobility of students increased to 4.1 million students in 2012, up from 2.1 million students in 2002 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2012).

However, little is known about this phenomenon. In viewing students through a migratory lens, what is specific to student migration? In terms of an educational lens, what are the expectations and outcomes of migrating for education? The paucity of research, particularly qualitative research, leads to questions concerning the uncertain status of this topic (Murphy-Lejeune 2002, 2010). If student mobility is meant to increase, a more appropriate knowledge of the experience is required. Where then is this emerging phenomenon situated in the academy? Scholars have been scrambling to keep up with the transnational education movement from various disciplines, falling primarily in the hands of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (Sovic & Blythman 2012). However, TESOL primarily focuses on language learning based strategies in the classroom (Wenden 1991), the integration of international students with domestic students (Carroll & Ryan 2005), multicultural group work (De Vita 2005), and international curriculum development (Knight & deWit 1995). TESOL is currently grappling with integrating ‘culture’, which remains an under-examined concept in the field (Atkinson 2012, Donald 2001). There is an abundance of literature generated from
the discipline of TESOL; however, the field has become overwhelmed by the dramatic increase in student mobility as the unit of analysis and scope has always been that of the individual in the classroom.

Where are international students situated in the discipline of education? Similarly, to TESOL, the educational literature has produced generative work on bilingual classrooms (Layzer 2000), diversity (Banks & Banks 2009), multiculturalism in the classroom (Corson 2000), and the internationalization of higher education (Altbach & Knight 2007, Brooks & Waters 2011). A large body of literature addresses the move away from assimilation and integration models to aptly address cultural pluralism (Mullard 1982); however, the scope of education literature is not inclusive to international students as it is more focused towards implementing diversity and multicultural education into an existing American classroom context.

The two generative theories produced by the education scholarship are intercultural competency theory (Taylor 1994) and transformative learning theory (Taylor & Cranton 2012). The former elucidates techniques generating an inclusive and integrative worldview, fostering students to effectively accommodate the demands of living in a host culture. Transformative learning theory mirrors adult learning theory, drawing on situated cognition theory (Kirshner & Whitson 1997), critical social theory (Agger 2006), and critical pedagogy (Darder et.al 2003). While all of these educational theories are generative and pragmatic in adult education, they fall short of holistically situating the larger picture international student mobilities and migratory experience.
Migration literature from the social sciences in North America (and Europe to a lesser extent) addresses the process of migration by generically focusing on a linear view of emigration from and immigration to (Haines 2013, 2010, Minami and Yamashita 2007). Immigration is often viewed as a finalized process, an assumption that matches the degree to which the United States is indeed the focal point of migratory desires and trajectories (Haines 2013). Human mobilities lies at the intersection of many fields and the current state of migration literature falls short in understanding the experience holistically (Haines 2013, Waters 2008). The literature from the U.S (and to a lesser extent Europe) illuminates the generic process of migration as a linear, economic movement from one site and back to another. When immigration is viewed as a finalized process, it is impossible to capture human mobility as it occurs in the world today. In the literature, “the United States is indeed the focal point of migration desires and migration trajectories” (Haines 2013:22), thus leading to the harmful assumptions of “adaptation” and “assimilation” that have had serious consequences on immigration policy, schools, and political discourse. These are precisely the policies applied both directly and indirectly to international students from the bureaucratic process of being granted a visa all the way to the experience of a U.S campus.

However, it has been recognized in recent years, primarily from a cultural geography lens, that migration is not necessarily permanent or total and that people do often return and may be involved in reiterative migration that leaves them grounded in more than one place. This recent literature aptly characterizes the international student experience; the
majority of international students have lived in more than one U.S. city and many seek internships in other countries such as Singapore or Dubai before returning home. Temporary migrants frequently move on a very individualized basis and their return is both a movement to a place and away from it - they are both going and coming home (Haines 2013). As migration has become a prominent characteristic of life and mobility is commonplace international students are undergoing a transformative educational migration (Gardener 1995; Appadurai 1996; Ong 2006) and only a few recent studies have begun to address this emerging phenomenon (Haines 2013, Brooks & Waters 2011, Raghuram 2012).

Migration scholarship has changed over the past two decades to reflect the understanding that migrants maintain ties to more than one place at one time. In other words, people are simultaneously embedded in multiple sites in which they live. More recent scholarship understands transnational migration as taking place within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants’ simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society. These arenas are multi-layered and multi-sited, including not just the home and host countries, but other sites around the world that connect migrants (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004, Pries 2005, Smith 2005).

More recent literature, sometimes referred to as transborder migration, recognizes that humans continually create and recreate boundaries, moving, trading, and communicating across them, thereby making fluidity and change a part of all human social formations and processes.
The state continues to remain important in shaping transnational practices (Koopmans & Statham 2003), despite the fact that the role of governance continuously shifts. However, political boundaries and the experiences of them are not always congruous. Anzaldúa (1987) described the space between the U.S and Mexico as a borderland, arguing that the political border artificially bifurcated what is actually a unitary social and emotional space. Sassen (1996) refers to such spaces as analytical borderlands that create “frontier zones”. People are shaping their identities in the context of iterative migration, no longer between two places, but often many more (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007, Kivisto 2001) and the experience is sometimes a contiguous space.

The transnational perspective in migration studies has been a welcome corrective to the methodological nationalist tendency to view migration through the lens of discrete nation-states (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller 2001). The debates in the scholarship continue to be about forms of activities within these cross border spaces (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007). It can be highly difficult to identify migratory trajectories and patterns. Pries (2004) found that he could not identify common patterns across the life course of his participants because he did not have the data that allowed him to adequately capture the lived experience across contexts. This is an important finding that shows the difficulties of creating categories out of people’s lives in migration research.

Although it is now understood that return migration is an integral part of the migration experience (Long & Oxfeld 2004), it remains one of the largest gaps in literature with the
discipline of psychology conducting the most research. One of the reasons return
migration continues to be understudied because the emphasis tends to be on the new
context, incorporating the additive countries only as a source of background information;
such methodologies do not successfully integrate more than one context into one social
field (Mazzucato 2007). The majority of work focuses on descriptions and theories of
entering the host culture (Ward and Kennedy, 1993, 2001; Burgelt et.al 2008), despite
reports that returning home may be even more difficult (Adler 1981, Sussman 1986,
2007), often exacerbated by the lack of anticipation of the difficulties (Martin 1984,
Szkudlarek 2010). This reveals that both the home environment and the returning
individual have substantially changed during the temporary migration (Brettell 2003,
Szkudlarek 2010). Hazen & Alberts recently published an article uncovering the
psychological stress that often accompanies a transnational life (2013:73). “The
complexity of the returnee experience is sometimes treated in rather conventional
migration terms, as a resumption of relatively normal life after the dislocation of
movement” (Haines 2013:22). In the context of international students, discovering the
perceptions of not only the expectations of a U.S education, but what it accomplishes for
students back home is central to revealing the major conditions and influences not only
propelling educational migration and the experience, but also the course, features, and
impacts of reentry migration.

Although cultural capital is a highly theorized concept, very few empirical investigations
have been done in applying this framework to international students (Waters 2008).
Johanna Waters’ (2008) work on international student from Hong Kong explored the role
of cultural capital in both propelling the educational migration as well as the impact the acquired capital had upon reentry. International students acquire a significant amount of cultural capital while studying abroad, but the course and impacts are highly contingent on the social context in which the student is re-embedded and this intangible asset is constantly being redefined and shifting. One stable pattern, however, is that as the economic landscapes of both South Korea (Lim & Jang 2006) and Saudi Arabia (Guazzone & Pioppi 2009) are becoming increasingly difficult to navigate, and thus students are becoming more creative in the way in which they set out to acquire cultural capital. This represents a new avenue from Bourdieu’s (1986) institutionalized cultural capital as represented by academic credentials. Academic credentials are still important, but the embodiment of cultural capital is increasingly gaining more relevance. Bourdieu defined this embodied state of capital as “involving a process of incorporation that implies labor of inculcation and assimilation, [and] costs time, time which must be personally invested by the investor” (Bourdieu 1986: 244). Applying Bourdieu’s (1986) framework to the currents of student mobility can uncover characteristics of not only how the movement of international students is constantly shifting, but also nascent patterns of globalization (Brooks & Waters 2012). This embodied state as an addition but not a replacement of academic credentials moves to the forefront of student motivations, aspirations, and cultural goals.

Marcus & Fischer (1986) have argued that anthropologists must address all forms of human mobility and the challenge remains “how to represent the embedding of richly described local cultural world in larger impersonal systems of political economy” (77).
This is best addressed, as the current project proposes, through a spatial analysis of education, migration, and movement, in hopes to uncover the interaction between social processes at different scales (Brooks et al. 2012). An anthropological perspective is equipped to situating international students through a multi-scalar approach, while simultaneously addressing the subjective experience of individual mobilities (Haines 2013); applying comprehensive theories of cultural capital to a specific context hopes to illuminate the lived experience of migration (Waters 2008).

U.S higher education is increasingly approaching international students from a student affairs perspective. The professional training that student affairs offers is potentially central to the international student experience; however, international students often do not speak with anyone involved with student affairs during their entire college careers. Professors, instructors, and graduate student teachers are the people who are highly influential in shaping the international student experience of higher education, but rarely are they trained on how to include and accommodate international students in their classrooms. However, Shanthi Robinson (2013) recognized the importance of viewing the international students in her classroom not just as sojourners who had temporarily traveled to Australia, but rather what she called, “potential migrants who were in the early stages of a complex and relatively new type of migration pathway”, representing a new trend of migration that includes mobility rather than the historically shaped, now obsolete mode of ‘settler migration’.
The education-migration nexus is a term that explains the emergent phenomenon of student mobility in the twenty-first century that recognizes the internationalization of education as a sociopolitical transformation occurring at local, national, transnational, and global scales (Robinson 2013; Mok 2003; Collins 2004, 2010; Huang & Yeoh, 2005; Waters 2005). An example to illuminate this multi-scalar phenomenon is the global standardization of testing that all international students undergo despite where they are from\(^{13}\). The ability to obtain and/or extend a student visa depends on objective test scores that determine one's legal status. Failing a test such as the TOEFL, IELTS, or exit exams at private language centers such as ELS, results in many outcomes such as premature return migration, which can entirely rearrange the course of someone’s life. Testing systems, like constantly shifting migration policies, are central to the educational migrants’ constant negotiations of their study, career goals, aspirations, and desires. There is a strong dialectic at play with international students shaping and being shaped by the marketization of higher education (Giroux 2009). International students are beginning to represent an important influx of financial resources for U.S. institutions (IIE 2013), especially at an unprecedented pace for public sector universities (Bound & Turner 2010). At the current historical conjuncture, student mobility can be best characterized as uneven geographies. Explicitly emphasizing the spatial inequalities carved out by transnational flows is one avenue in which to analyze and uncover the ideological underpinnings of neoliberal globalization (Waters & Brooks 2012). The growing demand for access to higher education has led to a worldwide market and the supply of

\(^{13}\) It is the opinion of many language teachers that objective testing is too narrow to capture the intricacy and complexity of language learning.
transnational education and the export of educational products and services now play an increasing role in fulfilling this demand (Van der Wende 2003). To make up for the decrease in funds that resulted from the drastic decrease in funding of social services under market-based policies of both state and private institutions, colleges and universities have prioritized revenue generation and have become increasingly reliant on private sources of funding (Slaughter & Rhoades 2004, Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Hill, 2003). In the U.K, international students contributed to 26.6% of the total budget in U.K universities (Waters 2008), while several Australian universities rely on international students for over a quarter of their income (Bradley et al. 2008). This larger political-economic backdrop of neoliberal globalization (Harvey 2005, 2007, Klein 2007, Hill & Kumar 2009, Ong 2006) represents an important frame constitutive of educational migration.

The phenomenon of student migration is important to investigate not only for issues of higher education, but also to capture the beginning of a social movement that has become an integral thread of neoliberal global capitalism. One hallmark of neoliberal capitalism lies in the economic instability of the global middle class. This is one of the main reasons propelling mobility as international students represent a group of people who have all similarly attempted to negotiate a secure place in an insecure world by leaving home in order transform themselves in one way or another. In this thesis, I plan to utilize a new perspective that brings together theories of space, place, transnationalism, and political economy coupled with transformative learning in order to theorize student mobility and capture stories of educational migration. I turn to the innovative use of mobile
methodologies (Fincham et al. 2010) where the researcher is engaged in mobile ethnography involving itinerant movement with people, expanding the paradigm of traditional anthropological methodology (Sheller & Urry 2006) and creating a space for the lived experience of the students to emerge.
Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

Methods
The following section will explain the research methods. After presenting the methods, I will expound on the methodology that informed this study. Methods and methodology – the latter a branch of epistemology – are highly interwoven concepts that are too often either compartmentalized or erroneously used as synonyms. For the purposes of the text, this chapter will break methods and methodology into two separate subheadings with the implicit understanding that, conceptually, this is improbable.

The People
Twenty-four international students, from Saudi Arabia (n=12) and South Korea (n=12), were chosen to participate in this study. All participants continue to be at varying stages of their educational migration process in multiple cities across the world; however, everyone began their U.S education at one of two language schools in San Rafael and Santa Cruz, California where I worked for seven years. At the time of data collection, the longest relationship between the researcher and participants is seven years and the shortest is three years. Appendix A provides a biographical profile of each individual that made this project possible.

Sampling and criteria for selection
Mixing both non-proportionate quota sampling and purposive sampling characterizes the population in this study. Quota sampling was chosen on the basis of the sample being stratified without necessarily randomizing the selection (Bernard 2011: 144). The sample is stratified according to the current location of the student, nationality, and gender to align with the research questions and ensure the stratum will be represented in proportion to the population (Creswell 2002:144). It is important to note that the scarcity of research on student mobility guided the selection of students on the basis of their nationality (Murphy-Lejeune 2002: 44), with the majority of research focused on Chinese international students and the subsequent diasporas (See Fong 2011, Waters 2008). Although there has been extensive research about the South Korean education system (Sorenson 1994; Park & Abelmann 2004; Seth 2002; Lee & Brinton 1996) little is known about South Korean international students abroad, especially from their perspective. Additionally, only one comprehensive study has been conducted with Saudi Arabian international students (Yamani 2000).

All participants have spent a minimum of three years in the United States. Furthermore, the participants within each stratum have been chosen purposively based on current location - residing in the U.S or have already returned to Saudi Arabia or South Korea. Purposive sampling techniques are highly necessary in studying highly mobile lifestyles (Murphy-Lejeune 2002, Falzon 2009); however, it is important to note that throughout the course of fieldwork, participants moved in and out of categories, highlighting one limitations and the messiness of social science research – freezing the frame on the dynamic nature of people’s lives. I tried to harness this to my best ability in order to not
just remain flexible, but rather to capture the transitory space. For example, three of the South Korean men I spent time with in Berkeley, California, I interviewed again upon their return migration to South Korea as it occurred in the middle of fieldwork. Their insights and contribution to this study are invaluable, however, it is important to note that this was not a part of the original sampling techniques employed as shown in the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Returned home</th>
<th>In the U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>South Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men (3)</td>
<td>Men (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (3)</td>
<td>Women (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Saudi Arabian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men (3)</td>
<td>Men (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (3)</td>
<td>Women (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data collection

Data collection occurred in three concurrent phases: 1) in-depth semi-structured interviews 2) focus groups and 3) participant observation. A detailed explanation of these systematic qualitative methods follows.

The principal method of data collection consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews that, on average, lasted two hours. Since the empirical research on student mobilities is scarce and primarily focuses on institutional aspects of the experience (Murphy-Lejeune 2002) the phenomenon calls for a qualitative approach that details personal accounts of the experience in all its ambiguity and complexity. Quantitative approaches and market analysis of the movement dominates the ideological underpinnings of the literature,
ignoring the socially embedded individual determinants (Haines 2013) as well as the student voice (Murphy-Lejeune 2010). To illustrate, in a meta-analysis [1] of 150 articles from various disciplines, only three articles utilized ethnographic methods with two employing ethnography (Maron & Connell 2008, Stringham 1993), and only twenty-six utilized interviews (Szkudlarek 2010). Capturing the individual student voices is a large part of what is missing from the literature and this method was chosen to effectively contribute to filling in this gap.

In order to capture mobility, multi-sited research informed the composition of this research, following the relationships across space (Falzon 2009). The setting of the interviews for those students in the U.S all took place in the interviewees’ homes or a local cafe in five cities across the United States where the researcher had been invited to stay for one week in each location. Thus, participant observation greatly enhanced the quality of data collection (Dewalt & Dewalt 2010), increasing the internal validity. For the students who had undergone return migration (n=12), the interviews took place through Internet video chat, Skype, from both South Korea and Saudi Arabia. However, it should be noted that the researcher has previously spent time in both locales, including the interviewees’ homes in both South Korea and Saudi Arabia. The places were not unfamiliar sites.

Additionally, four focus groups complemented the in-depth semi-structured interviews and initially were created to serve as a triangulation measure to further increase the
internal validity. The data collected in the focus groups turned out to be invaluable in this study.

Since, the relationship of the researcher and the participants began in a classroom environment as teacher and students, utilizing the medium of a focus group mirrored the classroom context in that a teacher [read researcher] facilitated discussion, with the primary goal of minimizing my own voice. In other words, the participants were comfortable with this medium, which facilitated an in-depth collective discussion, enhancing the quality of the data. The number of focus groups follows the sampling techniques of the study and were separated by both nationality (South Korean and Saudi Arabian) and by gender (men and women) in order to further create an open discussion in a more homogeneous atmosphere to level the playing field and reduce inhibitions (Morgan 1996). Focus groups are an ideal method to “find out why people feel as they do about something or the steps people go through in making decisions” (Bernard 2011:173). This important technique collectively elicited responses concerning the decisions to migrate for education and the experiences in real time or as they were unfolding.

Less formal observations and interactions informed this project for years. Participant observation has taken place in classrooms, airports, bars, bowling alleys, state parks, farmers markets, university campuses, libraries, and at holiday parties. Although South Korea and Saudi Arabia were chosen as a sampling technique in order to make data
collection manageable, students from all over the world informed the foundation of this study.

Data Analysis

All twenty-eight interviews and four focus groups were transcribed and coded by the researcher. Inductive coding was utilized, involving a three-step process: 1) initial coding 2) focused coding and 3) theoretical coding (Thomas 2006). Initial codes were provisional, line by line, and grounded in the narrative. Focused coding follows this process although becomes more conceptually directed and selected codes were put in order to integrate and explain larger portions of the data. Theoretical coding, then, specifies how the focused coding conceptually relates to one another. When missing pieces were identified or parts of the data were ambiguous, the participant was contacted - mostly by telephone - to talk about it. This particular method of inductive coding relied heavily on an organic, participant-focused collection of both data and the development of codes.

Limitations

There were several limitations. First and foremost, I do not speak Arabic or Korean. Although all participants in the study are fluent in English, the vocabulary words that I do know in both languages significantly helped the focus groups and the interviews, which served as a reminder of a language barrier. Another limitation to this study depends on valuation of what constitutes sound methods in social science research. As examined in Chapter Three, I knew all participants in this study. After sampling techniques were
randomized and differentiated based on nationality, gender, and location in the U.S, I emailed a long list of potential participants and the people who responded participated in this study. Then, while in New York, one of the people that had been chosen for this study extended his vacation. I called another person whom I knew was living in the area. A similar situation occurred in San Francisco. In addition to these two scenarios, it was obvious from the moment I received the first couple of email responses that the deeper the friend connection, the more likely the person would opt to participate. This was absolutely the case, which invited scientific bias. Scientific rigor, however, was never the objective of this project. The sample size (n=24) is insufficient enough to generalize the results. External validity, instead, was built through measuring the research methods of years of observation. Additionally, the reflexivity of the researcher was a top priority throughout the research process.

Methodology

_Mitigating anthropological concerns about technology and moving beyond rapport:_

_friendship as methodology paradigm_

The migrancy of the researcher to multiple sites is often required in capturing mobilities (Murray et al. 2010, Falzon 2009). Accordingly, semi-structured interviews were conducted in person in Berkeley, San Francisco, Denver, Chicago and New York in order to attend to the nuances of transnational livelihoods (Wilding 2007), while the return migration process was captured on the Internet through video chat Skype. Although there has been little use or consideration of utilizing technology in anthropological
methodology (Schwimmer 1996), it has also been recently argued by cultural geographers that conducting mobile interviews is becoming essential (Lashua & Cohen 2010) and key to adequately interrogating the social world (Murray et al. 2010). However, legitimate concerns arise with digital research, one of the most prominent being that it occurs at the expense of rapport or a connection. I am confident that anthropological concerns about online research were mitigated by the preexisting relationship of the researcher and the participants. Utilizing friendship as a methodology (Tillman-Healy 2006) forms the paradigmatic frame of this research, and, here, I argue that this frame holds the potential to overcome the limitations traditionally associated with the use of technology in social science methods (Bernard 2011) and also as a move towards decolonizing social science methods (Spivak 1988).

After establishing myself as an instructor among my colleagues and bosses at the language schools and as someone who received positive feedback from student evaluations, the atmosphere of the school opened up to a point where I was allowed to be myself. The workplace environment began to become more informal as trust defined the relationships with my bosses, colleagues, and students. Conversations with students became less cautiously proscribed and this opened up dialogue to cover a myriad of topics. Fostering this type of environment is essential for instructors to feel at ease with their students as long as the people in positions of authority are able to maintain a level of professionalism in such a casual, warm environment. This allowed for a deeper connection than what typically occurs between teachers and students, as opposed to workplace environments where the level of professionalism is concomitant to thick
boundaries. The thinness of boundaries made working at these two schools an amazing, fulfilling experience and also extremely difficult. There was never a moment in the day where I was alone. Students would follow me around and ask me questions in the bathroom and as I walked out to my car. There were days when I simply could not finish my lunch in the teacher’s office, without a student knocking at the door. They would text me if someone had stomach poisoning from alcohol or went to jail. It was quite consuming. However, the level of intimacy experienced was not typical of a teacher/student relationship. In maintaining professionalism at all times, there is of course an inherent hierarchy. However, a conscious effort was made on focusing on constructing a more horizontal rather than vertical relationship with students and this was further realized after I left my job and continued to stay in touch with students as they had all become friends. Many often visited me after I moved away. Three people had stayed at my house while they were in between visa debacles. Some simply wrote birthday messages once a year on Facebook or would send an occasional message on What's App. At the time, I found their experiences anthropologically fascinating, but it was not until later on that I dove into the social science literature to find few empirical investigations of this large movement. When I contacted people to ask them if they would participate in this research, the conversations were merely an extension of all previous conversations.

Friendship is a methodology technique that allows movement away from the traditional interview medium and instead the dialogue is an extension of many previous conversations. At the time of data collection, the shortest relationship between the researcher and participant was three years and the longest seven. Research moved from
the bottom up, becoming an extension of already existing connections. Thus, any concern of technology inhibiting rapport is not only mitigated, but also the quality of the interview is strengthened by the depth of discussion that comes from the relationship (Hesse-Biber & Levy 2006). Reinharz (1997) pointed out that researchers in the field do not simply play roles, but rather they bring multiple “selves” to the process of investigation (57). These multiple selves are often viewed as a hindrance to ‘objective’ research that should be disposed of, and, at the very least, minimized. However, I have found that throughout my research, conducted through the framework of friendship, multiple selves or roles in a relationship can instead be mobilized to go beyond the traditional boundaries of rapport to deeper realm of trust and create more nuanced, multi-voiced perspectives.

Although traditional forms of methods were employed (interviewing, focus groups, participant observation), the technique of friendship as method takes these further in that it is multi-voiced and requires the ethics of friendship in which the researcher’s interests shift from center to periphery constantly. An illustration of this may be of use. The first couple of days Ash and I spent together in Chicago consisted of catching up over tea, applying for graduation, me editing her final essay in an impromptu tutoring session, showing me around campus, buying her a coffee, her buying me Arabic food, doing an interview, watching a movie, talking about the future, showing me pictures, etc. In other words, the unfolding path of the relationship becomes the project and the boundaries become undone. What is typically constructed as a top down approach unravels as the relationship is far from vertical. Working towards, a horizontal relationship with
participants involved can be a difficult balance to construct and requires constant attention to boundaries, sensitivity, and ethical reflexivity.

Moving beyond rapport, friendship as a methodology traverses away from a traditional interview medium; instead, the dialogue is an extension of many previous conversations, thus, any concern of technology hampering or limiting connection is not only mitigated, but also the quality of the interview is strengthened by the depth of discussion that comes from the relationship (Hesse- Biber & Levy 2006). For instance, Diego and I established a friendship over the course of one year in Santa Cruz, California in 2011. When he returned to Al-Madinah in 2013, we kept in touch digitally through common platforms. After agreeing to participate in the research project, we talked in-depth on SKYPE throughout the summer and the fall. The first part of the interview consisted of revisiting his trajectory and experiences in the United States. I had intended for the second section of the interview to concentrate on return migration. One afternoon in July 2013, I had planned to ask Diego about his return migration experience. The conversation unraveled like this:

D: Hi Lauren. Can you hear me?
L: Hi. Yes, I can hear you. Can you hear me?
D: Good. Lauren, I was thinking we should discuss what happens after you finish education in the United States. Like when I came home...
L: Perfect.

14 Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook are the three most commonly used platforms in Saudi Arabia and I have adapted by utilizing all three platforms simultaneously. However, all interviews were conducted through Skype video chat.
Within seconds of establishing contact this afternoon, the interview began. The interviews naturally unfolded much like this example. Although the boundaries can easily be blurred here, it was within the digital world that we found a space to tease out and unpack this educational migration experience together. It soon became clear to me that people were eager to make sense of their experience through talking.

Accessing this realm of trust not only moves beyond rapport, but allows entrance to a more vulnerable exploration, which in turn enhances the research process. The foundation of each relationship coveted is characterized by friendship with additional ‘selves’ or roles built on top. For instance, the relationship as “participants” and “researcher” represented an added construct for everyone, which was built off a “teacher” and “student” dynamic that existed years before15.

Bringing all of these ‘multiple selves’ to the process of inquiry and investigation and moving in and out of each position when necessary added value to the research process.

“Friendship as method is neither a program nor a guise strategically aimed at gaining further access. It is an investment in participants’ lives that puts the fieldwork relationships on par with the project” (Tillman-Healy 2006: 279). I would take this notion a step further to say that the relationship is not on par with the project per se, but rather

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15 It should be noted that this dynamic traditionally conjures up notions of hierarchy and power. Following a Freirean approach to education, the relationship in the classroom was horizontally constructed from the beginning.
privileges the individual based on the ethics of friendship first and foremost. This is how the blurred lines of the researcher and participant function – they operate mainly on trust.

**Challenges to friendship as a methodology**

Consent in research is and should be treated as a process, not a one-time event. Most anthropologists find themselves being politely indiscreet with their digital recorders and notebooks. That is reflective of my behavior when I started fieldwork. Operating in this paradigm of friendship, however, I quickly learned that exactly the opposite behavior was required. Not only was this done with purposefully making my notebook and recorder highly visible, but I also constantly talked about the project, asking questions about how I should do things. When friendship forms the basis of the relationship between researcher and participant, there is no such thing as a key informant. In other words, everyone is a key informant and the researcher is left to decipher which people provide insight into which aspect of the project. Ash and Norah, for instance, were very insightful about their positionality in terms of gender, while Young and Young were very in touch with their ability to navigate U.S higher educational institutions. Talal and Mohammed were informative about their experiences interacting with American people, while Ju and Sujin alerted me to the educational conditions in Korea that often propel the movement abroad. The key informants, then, were about an individual’s reflective state on the topic being discussed because the relationship with the researcher had long been established.

The first challenge that this research technique proposes is the difficulty of time. This is not only a reference to the emotional components of friendship, but the obscured
boundaries about when specifically to finish fieldwork and stop data collection. With each participant in the United States, I spent approximately one week with each person, amassing much more data than I had intended. Researchers who utilize friendship as a methodology not only invest a significant amount of time, but typically walk away with a tremendous amount of data to sift through that, often, can only be done by the primary researcher. This, I would argue, continues to enhance the quality and reliability of the data; however, there is a significant time investment that can potentially conflict with deadlines.

Another significant challenge I encountered occurred when one particular participant wanted to clearly define and separate the space of research and the space of friendship. Although this was not directly stated, it became clear to me that this was the underlying issue at hand. Remaining sensitive to the needs of people is of utmost importance. The blurring of boundaries between researcher and participant, outsider and insider, emic and etic perspectives, have the potential to unravel and become undone.

Ali is brilliant and has a rather skeptical disposition towards others and the world around him. This originates from his perceptive ability to read people and make guesses about their underlying intentions, constantly observing behavior, and reflecting on his own place and thoughts. I know that I have earned as much trust as he is willing to provide and share with anyone in his life. He consistently tells me that I am one of the only people whose intentions he trusts and therefore “getting mad at me is always going to be temporary”. However, we have had some intense, heated moments in our friendship and
in the process of fieldwork, and the realm of research was no exception to this, especially as it created a new, more undefined, space for our friendship.

Ali and I had spent the weekend together and found ourselves sitting outside talking. I gestured to my notebook asking if I could ask him some questions for the project that I had already told him about extensively. He nonchalantly agreed and continued to smoke, freely talking about not wanting to get involved with many Saudi students because they tended to bring the evil eye\textsuperscript{16} with them from the Arabian peninsula. Suddenly becoming hyperaware, Ali stopped freely talking, becoming highly cognizant of the tension he perceived between the content of what he was talking about and the issue of representation. The issue of representation became clear to me only after revisiting and reflecting on what had happened. The ability for an envious individual to possess power over someone else is prohibited in certain interpretations of Islam because God does not permit this to happen to anyone except possibly those who have forgotten about him\textsuperscript{3}. Thus, in freely discussing a topic that Ali and I would as friends, suddenly became an issue of representation in the mode of researcher and participant. He got angry – a primary emotion for him – and asked how I was going to represent this sensitive topic. I told him that I did not have to document anything about this topic. He became increasingly angry and dismissive so I closed the notebook, tucking it back into my bag. I told him that we were done. Since his reaction was already adverse to the research space, continuing would be privileging research over friendship. Because he is so highly self-

reflexive of how he sounds to different audiences each time he speaks, it became too hard
to continue to have him be a central part of the project. From a researcher-perspective,
this is a huge loss to the project. However, from a friendship-perspective, I fully respect
his skeptical disposition and quick ability to understand the complicated politics of
representation.

In reflecting on this uncomfortable encounter, one way that this could have been
mitigated would be the use of a digital recorder. The use of technology – a digital
recorder - in this space has the potential to delineate and define the research space. On the
other hand, absolute transparency remains the most important code of ethic for this
research much like it does in any true friendship. It is necessary to speak of the project
immediately, informing people about the hope for them to be a participant in the research,
and what that entails. As I mentioned earlier, consent is a process, not a one-time event.
When the space of friendship and the space of research purposefully become blurred, the
friendship is always privileged.

The reflexive spaces of interviews and focus groups

All participants expressed that they felt as if the method of both interviews and focus
groups served a purpose beyond the collection of data, expressing that “talking like this”
was very beneficial to understanding and situating themselves in the larger picture of
student migration. In other words, the focus groups spontaneously acted as a kind of
informal group therapy in that private consciousness had a space in which to surface to a
more public consciousness. Young Ik reflects as he refers to both the individual interview
and the Korean male focus group: “This interview is for me, maybe, not for you...I was
healing by myself and I really wanted to have a conversation with you because you really understand me and the emotional things so we can get empathy so I like this conversation a lot.”

Anthony Giddens discusses the concept of ‘reflexive monitoring’ in his theory of structuration, referring to an individual’s ability to monitor their behavior and context as an essential component of agency (Giddens 1986). Occurring on both levels of practical and discursive consciousness, the knowledge that a person possesses in navigating everyday life is so embedded it is hardly noticeable. Reflexive monitoring, I argue, has the potential to become amplified in the space that is created by a focus group or an interview - both intimate communicative interactions - encouraging the unnoticeable to surface. Here are three individual quotes that were recorded independently of one another:

Patric: But for me, this was a great opportunity to look back at my life here and think wow, I have changed and wow I have done this. it was a really good time. I am thankful for this time. it is easy to forget about yesterday and this is important.

Ju Young: I kind of feel like a famous person! Haha....yeah, I should remember my story about this and it is helping me think about it. It is kind of an amazing time to sit here and remember this beautiful time too. you made me remember this. I kind of lost my goal. but I also realized what is my real goal or new created goal again - so I am thankful for this.

Young -ah: Oohhh...It is really good for me. I can recall everything about my life in the U.S. Iam leaving so soon so this is a great experience to have this opportunity and meet you again. It is really great experience. You know, it is easy to forget this perspective. This helps me to remember my big accomplishments
All of these quotes uniquely highlight and provide insight into the individual interview and focus group space that encourages reflexive monitoring that leads to the surfacing of the underlying sense of agency possessed by international students. International students’ subject and are subjected to constant change. One participant, Young Joo, was interviewed in the Bay Area the day before he was leaving for South Korea after living in the United States for five years:

It feels like, you know...yeah...it was...how can I say...I have been here five years and I look back at the time I came here to the day I am leaving...it was like a flashback. It is a great experience to have this to help me know where I am now and think about it. Just thinking about it and talking about it are totally different so, I don’t know...I think you are a genius and this is really great.

Young Joo’s reflection on his individual interview represents a closing of a chapter in his life. He reflected on how the interview enabled him not only to reflect on the past five years of his life, but also gave him a new sense of accomplishment and closure. In a transnational space in which one place is about to become a thing of a biographical past to an uncertain new future (i.e. leaving tomorrow), Gidden’s reflexive monitoring opens to a level shifting from subconscious to consciousness in which the process becomes surprisingly noticeable to the individual.

Similarly, Jonathan Kozol (1991) shows how focus groups often act as potential “sites of collective struggle” or as “pedagogical instruments” (52). The goal of research, he purported, is not to simply obtain data or unearth private information, but rather to access knowledge by making the invisible visible. In other words, lived contradictions that have
been rendered as “normal” by hegemonic power/knowledge regimes often surface in focus groups and this can be a site of both contestation and learning, but also as a form of informal group therapy as expressed by the participants in this study. Madriz’s (2000) explains how when using focus groups as a medium for women of color, the method often acted as an empowerment and conscious raising activity (893). Since the researcher becomes decentered and acts as a facilitator, a safe space opens for people to talk about their lives and reconceptualize them in fundamental ways, allowing for “nearly always complex and multivalent articulations of instructional, political, and empirical practices and effects”7 (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis 2005: 887) to emerge.

Reflections from the field: Is this multi-sited ethnography?

In an effort to move away from the traditional genres of ethnography while simultaneously capturing social meaning in an age of globalization, the idea of multi-sited ethnography sets out to reject classical assumptions of anthropology in which participants are spatially incarcerated, immobilized within and confined to a single place (Appadurai 1988). Rejecting the enforced notions of space, place, and culture (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), the once thought of entangled web has become more of an unraveled coincidence or deterritorialized space (Appadurai 1988, 1996). From this theoretical stance, multi-sited ethnography was regarded as a way to capture the inside of globalization as an unfolding process, rather than seeing it as an external system imposing itself on the lived experience (Marcus 1995, Burawoy 2009).
George Marcus’s ideas (1995) remain foundational to many scholars’ understanding of multi-sitedness, despite the fact that Marcus himself has moved on from this original articulation. Calling for anthropologists to move away from what he termed the ‘Malinowski complex’, his proposal of undoing traditional conceptualizations of what constitutes ‘the field’ is necessary to not only keep up with the time and space compression (Harvey 1989), but also to move away from the binary of the anthropologist and the other. The latter is of utmost importance to my research: “…multi-sitedness displaces the anthropologist-other binary and creates collective aspects of research that must become a standard part of authoritative standards for ethnography” (Marcus 2011:22). Theorizing the nascent cultural space of educational migration remains novel and yet it is necessary to situate and make sense of this not new, but only recently visible phenomenon of student mobilities. Only in collaboration based on the principles of friendship with participants can the lived experience of this space be understood.

Recently, there has been a tension between theory and methods in the academy – one in which the STEM fields have come to dominate the production and contours of knowledge, emphasizing methods that have compartmentalized and peripheralized theory. In the discipline of Anthropology, this tension has been a generative site of contestation in producing literature and sparking academic debates. The inseparability of theory and methods is foundational to this project. It is important, however, to point out that theories of modernity have captured and emphasized the deterritorialization of place, while traditional approaches to ethnographic methods treat both time and space as stagnant, marginalized categories. In attempting to reconcile this friction, I have tried to
divorce the conceptual design and apparatus of the study from theory and rather focused the connection on the ethnography itself in which the participants take on a problem that is cognitively shared with the ethnographer. Participants, here, are not merely anthropological subjects, but instead this methodological stance demands that they are epistemic partners in shaping the foundations of the research. The debate then becomes somewhat unraveled and dissolved.

Located across the educational landscape of the United States, international students have taken up residence in thousands of college towns and cities, which from an anthropological viewpoint, diffuses the necessity of a site and accentuates the importance of space over place. The question, then, becomes: When and where is the entrance point of the researcher? While place remains important, the participants in this research all studied the English language for a minimum of one year in the larger San Francisco Bay Area and from this one “site”, dispersed all over the country and world ending up in U.S colleges and universities as well as returning to Saudi Arabia and South Korea to wait for possible admissions letters to arrive, opening the door for new visas to be issued. Some of the participants had already undergone the process of return migration after dropping out of student status or completing intended degrees. Two participants in this study made the decision to take up permanent residence in the U.S. One was deported from Florida and moved to New Zealand. This is a classic case of the messiness of social science research, particularly migration research – by the time your design is in place, it is rendered obsolete and undone by movement, which is the precise object of inquiry.
Although I traveled to different regions of the U.S to conduct semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and engage in participant observation, the current study does not necessarily fit within the conceptual boundaries of what constitutes multi-sited ethnography. Although the boundaries are far from defined, my approach to this is best aligned with Rajan’s (2011) argument that “multi-sited ethnography is not a literalist methodology as much as a conceptual topology” (Rajan 2011:175). Utilizing this conceptual topology in order to examine student movement, I have found, is highly generative as student mobilities does require the movement of the researcher. This conceptual focus, like migration studies, can be difficult and raises the question of whether or not academics are best positioned for this type of ethnographic investigation.

In abandoning the idea of a preexisting site, the researcher can shift towards an approach in which the entrance point of inquiry is [admittedly] theoretically constructed, rather than a claim of a natural empirical object. Burawoy (2009) explains that following the flows and linkages across national boundaries is one of the ways in which multi-sited ethnography works well.

Since it is necessary to be self-conscious of imposing theory onto a site, often turning it into an object of inquiry, Burawoy argues for a multi-case ethnography as a move away from multi-sited ethnography. A case, from this perspective, is “doubly constituted: realistically by the social forces within which it is embedded and the social processes it expresses, and imaginatively by the position we hold in the field and the theoretical
framework we bring to bear” (203). Is the current study, then, a multicase ethnography or a multi-sited ethnography?

I would argue neither. However, before conducting fieldwork, the research design was set up this way. So, what had happened? Much like Ghassan Hage explained (2005), I found that it was impossible for me to intimately engage in and with more than two sites and remain committed to conducting quality research. It is not that an ethnography can ever capture all social relations, but at the same time it is important to uphold a certain reflexivity concerning what is not being covered. In other words, defining the limits and limitations of research should be of utmost importance in all research.

Since I was committed to studying the transnational movement of students, I simply could not treat all the dispersed locations as one site (Hage 2005:466). Then, I began to reflect on the nature of a “site”. If I am focused on people from various locations around the globe as one site, then this research cannot be called a multi-sited ethnography “...because this would be at the expense of making light of the meaning of an anthropological site” which takes an inordinate amount of time to become familiar with (Hage 2005:466). So, although the interviews, focus groups, and participant observation for this research were physically conducted across different regions in the U.S and two international countries, this study is better characterized as a globally spread, geographically non-contiguous site – nevertheless, one site.
Hage (2005) succinctly elucidated the methodological concern of not being able to fully capture the essence of multi-sited work:

As far as my own research was concerned, as I faced the choice of either doing an ethnography of X1 in relation to A or X2 in relation to B and so on or to do an ethnography of the relation between X1, X2, X3 and X4, I decided to do the latter.

I took my site to be the geographically non-contiguous space where a specific transnational culture with its enduring social relations was flourishing. To do so is to make a choice of emphasizing those global relations and the circulation of goods, communication, money, people and emotions that occurs within them. Or, to put it differently and perhaps a bit more simply, it is a choice of emphasizing the migrants’ transnational culture at the expense of their “settlement culture, even if, as is clearly the case, one cannot be understood separately from the other” (466).

As soon as I left Chicago, this became clear to me. I, personally, do not know what it is like to live for an extended period of time in Chicago and the research I had conducted in the Bay Area – a place where I had lived and interacted with participants for six years – was so much more familiar. When Diego examined his interactions with American people, he referred to his experience at a nightclub in Santa Cruz. Not only did I know the place he was referring to, but I had specifically been there with him before. This was simply not the case when Talal explained his interactions with Americans on his morning commute on the F-train from Brooklyn to Manhattan. Although I have taken that train hundreds of times, it was more than a decade ago and I have never ridden that train with him. What is required of the researcher to conduct a true multi-sited ethnography, I came to find out, is beyond the reach of this study. I agree with Hage (2005) that
anthropologists need to remain more skeptical about what constitutes a multi-sited ethnography because although they are theoretically attractive and it is necessary for the discipline to move away from the fixed, static notion of a “site” and the “field”, it requires an extended period of time, resources, and is physically demanding until a place is known intimately and participants’ interactions with their environment is understood. Although the F-Train has significance to me and it holds significance to Talal, it is important to separate these understandings as the train is not the same place due to our own positionalities and historical conjecture.

Engaging openly with the research process has also taught me that I truly do not have a site, but rather a set of flexible and constantly shifting relations. In the thick of fieldwork, it became almost irrelevant whether someone was in Los Angeles or New York. It is about the lived experience of being a transnational student engaged in a migratory movement.

On the other hand, place reemerges and the site becomes of the utmost importance in the context of return migration. However, without the physical return to that site – where one comes from becomes the imaginary and where one had projected the imaginary, then, becomes mundane and tangible. In other words, California no longer becomes the imaginary, but rather Riyadh or wherever one is not, takes its place. This is precisely why the shifting subjectivity and relation takes precedence over traditional forms of the anthropological site. Although the site here may not be multi-sited as anthropologists of migration often claim – the site instead subsumes its position to those occupying it. While
it is globally spread and geographically non-contiguous, it most likely is not necessarily a multi-sited ethnography when the site is uprooted or deterritorialized itself.

In the human condition, however, it is clear that a need for both place and space exists. Stretched conceptions of the complicated concept of “home” may occur, but it is important to emphasize migrants’ need for roots and to criticize an approach where a rhizomatic – always on route to nowhere – approach has been too often applied to the diaspora condition. Migration is a subjective form of movement and it depends on the lived experience of the movement. Although the average international student in my study lived in seven different houses in the U.S, the actual movement varies with some traveling as little as one or two days. The importance is to not focus solely on the movement, but on the significance it has for the individual (Hage 2005:470). This is precisely the aim of this project.
Chapter 4: Historical Context & Background

Student migration has always been multi-faceted, but one of the most “...striking correlations and counterpoints that bridge the two, usually separated spheres of foreign relations and educational history” (Raghuram 2013:16). The intersections of state interests and international students have always mirrored the relationship between international education and American foreign affairs (Garltiz 2012). Recent scholarly developments extend this notion by arguing that, “international education has had more to do with foreign affairs than traditional interpretations have recognized” (p.1-2). How have these overlapping developments of international education and foreign affairs been characterized? Have they shifted over time? How does this rhetoric and discourse influence student life? Providing context and situating the student migratory movement is necessary in order to characterize the historical present of the research.

This section will analyze the varied rhetoric and discourse surrounding student migration and historically situating it using one of Cohen & Kisker’s (2010)’s higher education eras for organizational purposes. Beginning in Mass Higher Education Era (1945-1975) characterized by the presence of the nation-state in shaping student mobility, I anticipate that this will serve to not only illuminate the historical sentiments, but also how they have shaped the present as well as the future. By highlighting the historical rhetoric and discourse of these eras characterizing the international student population, I hope to provide historical context that helps to situate the present.

Mass Higher Education Era (1945-1975)
The United States unquestionably became the most powerful nation on earth at the end of WWII, resulting in tremendous expansion of higher education often referred to as the golden years of education (Cohen & Kisker 2010: 187). International educational exchanges are also constitutive of the domestic growth that characterizes this era. Over the quarter century from 1950 to 1978 the number of tertiary-level students in foreign countries increased from 107,589 to 842,705 (UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1976). Quantitatively, studying overseas had only become important since the end of WWII. With the recent restoration of peace in 1945, educators and political leaders turned the focus to rebuilding and reorganizing global connections (Bevis & Lucas 2007: 102). There are a lot of illustrations in this era of the nation-states interest in facilitating foreign educational exchanges as the global order was being redefined. Students, and their very bodies, become a site of political representation and contestation. I will outline two illustrative examples.

Sponsored by the Institute of International Education (IIE), a young man named Hermann set out to be the first post-Hitler German exchange student in the United States (Time Magazine, 1947). The U.S government had arranged for Hermann to attend Union College in Schenectady, New York and he arrived before the Marshall Plan and the redevelopment of Europe had begun. Time Magazine pedestalled Hermann, showing how he was chosen for this ‘cultural exchange’ as a type of pilot program to see if cross-cultural encounters could rebuild the two nations unstable ties (Time 1947). The time was ripe for change. Concurrently, Senator Fulbright had introduced an inspiring bill to Congress that President Harry Truman signed into law in 1946. Allied powers, at the
time, had owed the United States for the borrowed equipment and supplies utilized throughout the war and rather than pay the debt, each country set up a local Fulbright Educational Exchange Program. In other words, the surplus of war property was to be set up as educational endowment funds (Bevis & Lucas 2007:104). With the passage of the Fulbright Act, the U.S government began to establish travel grants and eventually, the visa structure was reassessed to encourage international education (IIE, Open Doors 1950:11).

These are merely two instances of how the expansion of international education was embedded in foreign affairs and policy in the United States. International education started to become highly visible on American college and university campuses during this time and this was openly shaped by the power of the state. Exchange programs were overseen by the expanding IIE, which had opened a bureau in Washington D.C (Bevis & Lucas 2007:108). International education had now begun to establish infrastructure to run state-sponsored programs in “reeducation and democratization”. The initial impetus for this was to reestablish alliances with Germany and Japan in order to restore trade. Quickly, the U.S government and the IIE helped push Japan from twenty-second to the thirteenth student-sending country as well as Germany from the seventh to the third” (Kramer 2012:16). The overlap of foreign affairs and international education are highly evident. Ina Corinne Brown made this clear in 1965 with the following quote:

While we should not lose sight of the fact that the main purpose of international education is education and that this purpose is worthy in and of itself, there is no escaping the fact that, whatever the avowed motive of the United States in encouraging students from other countries to come here, there are certain expectations beyond the strictly academic ones (47).
What are these expectations? The basic tenets of modernization theory provide the backdrop of international education in the Mass Higher Education Era. New nations and nascent democracies were coming onto the world stage quickly and the United States saw a space to insert its hegemony through the body of the foreign student. Brown explained that “Many of the new nations in the world are economically underdeveloped with the almost total lack of educated leadership; the direction taken by any particular country in the future may well depend on where its students go for an education and the kinds of experiences they have in the host country” (1965:48).

Foreign students, during this era, were conceptualized as relatively powerful agents of change. It was not long before that foreign students were viewed as a marginal luxury that served the purpose of enriching American students; however, this shifted in the post-war years and colleges started to become highly self-conscious about following the international or burgeoning cosmopolitan trends. In the Journal of Higher Education in 1955, Smith reflects on the role of government in supporting student exchange as a national policy objective, stating that the administrations of universities could no longer be satisfied in maintaining the campus as a free market of ideas because of nationalist mandates and the post-war historical sentiment made accommodating foreign students a directive (234). This message was relayed to foreign students by both their home and host governments. Brown (1965) explains that the role of a student should not be underestimated in the slightest because they have been “an important means of cultural exchange throughout history” (p. 48).
John F. Kennedy, for instance, was personally invested in the welfare of foreign students hosted by America’s colleges and universities. In the J.F.K archives, a memorandum written by the President in 1961 addressed to the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, concerns the acculturation of foreign students, particularly those from Asia and Africa. He laments about how foreign students are dealt with in “uncoordinated private enterprises” and how they should be taken more seriously by the state (Kennedy 1961). Intimate with the foreign student experience from earning a degree from the London School of Economics, Kennedy took great pride in addressing foreign students directly and often invited groups of students to the White House. His speeches centered on the theme of international students being agents of change for a better future. He also spoke about democracy being the most important force in the world and how students needed to bring this back home, making it clear that students should not be studying abroad “merely as an opportunity to advance your economic interest, but to advance the welfare of your country.” (Kennedy 1961). International students clearly were a cultural political project of the state. He also often expressed his hopes for international students to “think well of this country and recognize what we are trying to do” (Bevis & Lucas 2007: 155). International students were treated a site of transformative agency and power in this era. Agents of change in a world that was redefining and reorganizing itself.

Until the late 1960s, student migration to the United States saw explosive growth across every axis: the number of students, the breadth of sending countries, proliferation of sponsorship programs and international education organizations. All of this began to transform college and universities campuses and the internationalization of education that
would take place in the decades to come. The U.S government’s role in participating in international educational exchanges mirrored this period of exponential growth of mass education and a precariously changing world. They promoted and shaped student migration with an increasingly intense geopoliticization, both structurally and discursively. International education in this era was marked by a sharpened sense of foreign students as critical actors of global politics of post-WWII, the Cold War, and decolonization (Kramer 2012:17). In 1951, W.L. White observed, for example, that the President of Ecuador and Afghanistan’s General Director of Labor had both been international students in the United States. Presently, a Kenyan-Kansan from Hawaii could illustrate the same sentiment.

It is challenging to conceptualize how this nexus of education and migration shaped student life without a comparative analysis of the present. Unlike today, students felt highly empowered as agents of change. Much of the rhetoric and discourse framed international students in this light. Additionally, international students saw themselves in this way: one Chinese student remarked in 1961, “I feel really powerful…you know…not many people do what I am doing in my country so is my duty go home and help my country like this place” (Bu 2013:115). Not only was this a great opportunity, but also they occupied a socioeconomic landscape in which transforming cultural capital into economic capital was a relatively easy transition upon reentry migration. “It is my duty to show the American people my country as well as bring American ideas back home to help my people,” said international student Myungwoo Lee just years after the Korean war armistice (Kil & Moon 2001: 43). In these quotes, the nation-state is at the heart of
obligatory behavior and action of student migration. This was not always the case in the past nor is it indicative of the future; however, the role of the nation-state in shaping student life in this era is one of the key factors in both propelling and shaping the migratory experience. As Liping Bu indicates, foreign students coming to America was embedded in the idea of training the “future leaders of the world” with American values and ideals; it was not an altruistic attempt to transmit knowledge and cultural exchanges, but rather a cultural political project to “make the world like us.” (2003: 2). Students, however, had agency to negotiate the rhetoric and discourse from the state. Unlike the quote from Myungwoo Lee above, many Korean students were actively engaged in revolutionary activities that sought to overthrow colonial and then dictatorial rule at home (Wang 2013:4). This is an example of how student life on American colleges and campuses was often characterized and acted out through what Benedict Anderson called “long-distance nationalism” (1998:59). This is still evident today, although the nation-state has receded from the foreground in propelling and shaping this movement, especially moving into the Reagan years that changed the nature of international education from a nationalist discourse to that of alleviating the college and university from state disinvestment. This rhetoric has played a heavy hand in creating generalized images and stereotypes that shape the international student experience on campus today. In borrowing the lens of international education, it becomes clear that the approach to its development was relatively unstructured and the fabled Ivory Tower rhetoric is simply untrue; higher education is always subject to the pressures and constraints of the surrounding society (Kerr 1994:9). Just as Rudolph (1962) noted, depictions of the Ivory
tower in the nineteenth century surrounded the president of a university spending more
time fund-raising than exercising educational leadership (p. 168). Not much has changed.

The Entrepreneurial University (1981-present)

One of the most sweeping and dramatic social experiments of the last few centuries
represents a drastic transition in the theoretical approach to human nature. First arising in
the eighteenth and nineteenth century, liberalist arguments of the free, unfettered market
as fundamental to regulating human interactions resurfaced and grabbed hold of the
country through neoclassical economic doctrines. An underlying current in this school of
thought was that “market exchange captures an essential and basic truth about human
nature and the creation and maintenance of social order” (Harvey 2005: 2). This social
policy came to be referred to as neoliberalism in most of the world (Ward 2012:1) except
in the United States where it is more often referred to as market-based policies and
neoconservativism (Ong 2006:1). The role of the state is to create and preserve an
institutional framework characterized by private property rights, free markets, free trade,
and opposed to regulation (Harvey 2005:2). The emphatic turn towards neoliberal
policies in the 1970s and their full-fledge force in the 1980s make the pervasive effects
very hard to see as this has become incorporated into the very way we see and accept the
world (Harvey 2005:3, Ong 2006: 43).

Prior to the adoption of neoliberal policies, higher education in many Western societies
was viewed as a collective responsibility of the state (Ward 2012: 202). However,
neoliberal policies have pushed for a type of “user pay” system in which the cost of
higher education is decollectivized and shifted away from the state to the individual. While the individual has been responsible to pay tuition throughout American higher educational history, the cost of tuition has increased twelve-fold since 1978 (Jamrisko & Kolet 2012). The student, then, has no choice but to choose, but the choices have large risks that the individual must be willing to shoulder, hence the large attention drawn to the current student debt crisis. This is not to say that higher education is a fully liberalized economic institution, but rather represents a quasi-market situation – what Ward (2012) calls “decentralized centralization” (p.7) – a space in which the state and the market have merged. This is always subject to change. However, it is important to note that neoliberalism here represents a type of governance – one in which the state is used as an auditing role to work to ensure the expansion of markets. This is the relationship that now best characterizes the university and particularly international education.

In the landscape of the early 1990s, American educators and politicians began to express growing concerns about the robust competition between countries and universities for international student enrollment. In 1995, The Chronicle of Higher Education reported about the immense competition between Canada, Australia, the U.K, and the U.S in a race to serve the largest number of foreign students, ramping up their recruitment efforts and marketing their institutions (Bevas & Lucas 2007:175). There is one avenue, however, that has pushed the U.S to the forefront of this global competitive market: community colleges.
Community Colleges came onto the scene in the 1980s as well and now play a large role in servicing the international student population. In fact, fifteen percent of all international students are enrolled in community colleges (Cohen & Brawer 2008:48). This remains the cheapest alternative to four-year state and private universities as well as language programs. One of the most important aspects of this system for international students is that almost all students are accepted (Cohen & Brawer 2008:48) and it is a path to transfer to a four-year university. For example, Diablo Valley College in California has a direct transfer to the UC system from their school, ensuring admissions (Gobel 2012:1). The community colleges have always been known as feeder schools for the university, but only recently has this taken on a new meaning with international student enrollment.

By 1999-2000, international student enrollments were the highest they had ever been with 514,723 students (IIE, Open Doors 1999-2000). Campus, especially in small college towns, had become cultural cosmopolitan centers in which many languages were spoken. However, the integration of international students has not been as promising as recruitment centers abroad advertise. Dr. Gareis, a researcher at Baruch College, reported that 40% of international students on American college and university campuses report having no American friends (Gareis et al. 2012: 309). The study explains that there are internal factors that contribute to this, but also that there is a general lack of interest in the American student body in intercultural affairs (2012:313). At the most recent Association of International Education Administrator Annual Conference, this lack of integration to the campus community was attributed to the structural, social context of higher education.
campuses. In order to harness global education that benefits everyone, structural adjustments to increase encounters need to be made that are curricular, co-curricular as well as informal (Redden 2013: 1). It is clear that more research needs to be conducted concerning the regions international students are traveling from as East Asian students report much less interaction with American students and report much lower satisfaction with their international education in general (Jaschik 2012: 1).

This period of high enrollment was celebrated in the United States. In 1993, Bill Clinton discussed the importance of international student enrollment: “No one who has lived through the second half of the 20th century could possibly be blind to the enormous impact of exchange programs on the future of countries…” (Clinton 2004). Clinton did not know at the time that he would soon be signing a bill that would affect every international student. Eyad Ismoil, a student at Wichita State University, was one of the people who had first bombed the World Trade Center in 1993 (Bevis & Lucas 2007: 195). He was in the United States on a student visa and there was a serious populist outcry that called for tracking international students. Clinton signed the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) that would not only tighten borders for both entry and exit purposes, but also colleges and universities were responsible to report to the government about students. Failure to do so could result in revoking the license to sponsor visas (Bevis & Lucas 2007:198). Campus advisers were highly worried about their jobs being transformed into Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) agents.
Shortly after, the $45 million tracking program, Coordinated Interagency Partnership Regulating International Students (CIPRIS), was born as the first tracking system, later transformed into Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) – the one that is used today. Public debate continued unabated in the coming months. In February 2004, this debate erupted on the University of Massachusetts, Amherst campus when more than two hundred students refused to pay the newly implemented international student fee, part of which is given to SEVIS to track the student. The Graduate Employee Union won this battle on the grounds that you could not directly charge people of color a diversity fee or women for the women’s center, for example (Bevis & Lucas 2007: 207).

Regardless, the majority of universities continue to charge an international student fee.

After September 11, 2001, a lot of misinformation spread in the interstices of fear. Although only one of the hijackers, Hani Hanjour, had been on a student visa and the other eighteen on business and tourist visas (Farley 2013), the political atmosphere became charged and unwelcoming towards all international students, especially students from Islamic countries. It is important to note that students from Western Asia during this time represented only 6% of the total international student population. Senator Feinstein called for all new student visas to halt for six months, and, for the first time since this era began, enrollment only increased at a rate of less than 1% (Bevis & Lucas 2007: 213).

Enrollment from India and China initially remained steady, while it became nearly impossible for students from United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia to obtain visas (Urias & Yeakey 2005: 187). However, this hold on Saudi Arabian visas would not last long. As soon as the enrollments began to decline everywhere, not only was it
acknowledged that a large revenue stream for university was threatened, but also the ability to compete in the international arena was being stifled. The U.K, Australia, and New Zealand all put extra funds and effort into recruitment in this post-September 11th period (Bevis & Lucas 2007: 245). While the U.S still remained the top destination, the global competitive marketplace of education was in full force. However, by the middle of 2006 American college and university administrations and education organizations acted accordingly to try to stabilize enrollment by lobbying and petitioning the U.S government to loosen the visa regulations. Largely everyone agreed that the reason for this decline had to do with visa regulations and procedures final being revisited due to the loss of revenue (2007:218). Although both NAFSA and the IIE were pleased about the loosening of visa restrictions, both organizations issued statements explaining, “education is a commodity that needs to be protected and held to the utmost priority” (2007:245). An education was now officially an item that can be exchanged in the marketplace - according to two of the most prominent educational organizations in the world. If cognitive capitalism has commodified education, then what of the students obtaining an education? Who are the stakeholders in the commodification of cognition?

“Although increasingly able to escape localization by state authorities, traveling subjects are never free of regulations set by state power, market operations, and kinship norms" (Ong 1999:19-20). Ong’s quote here elucidates the complex entanglement of stakeholders at play for international students in this era. An example of this entanglement can be seen through King Abdullah’s scholarship program managed by the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) in Washington D.C. Over 120,000 Saudi
Arabian students are in the United States on scholarship as of 2010. They study in private enterprises on college campuses such as INTO or ELS Language Centers for one year and then are put into “pathway” programs as they enter four year universities. However, the fields of study that are approved of are limited to either business or STEM fields (Alomar 2011). A Saudi Arabian student who is passionate about history has their funds revoked and is eventually sent home. While the Kingdom recognizes the importance of the Saudi Arabian state, the scholarship program is a mission to develop the private sector (House 2012: 56, Lippman 2012: 197). Also, it is important to note that the high enrollment of Saudi Arabian students skyrocketed after September 11, 2001. The reasons here are beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is necessary to contextualize this student movement as having multiple rationales. Saudi Arabian youth mostly agree that this scholarship program was created due to the unstable ties that occurred after September 11, 2001. Exporting American cultural values and free market principles through international students may be a more acceptable way than previous avenues.

The international student recruiters have left specific regions and have moved onto new territory. Recruiters have left South Korea and Japan, for example, and have moved to China, Vietnam, Brazil, and Southeast Asia, which purportedly represent the waves of the future. As the global north evolves more towards the global south (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012), it is imperative to bridge the geopolitical gap of student migratory movements. Study abroad programs in Saudi Arabia and Brazil are state-sponsored programs seen as long-term investment policies to guide the nations into an unknown future. As the world has undergone an emphatic neoliberal turn and less and less emphasis is placed on nation-
states, the international student market remains a quasi-market in the intersections between the state and corporations.

In the entrepreneurial university, education needs to be fought for to remain at the forefront. Students need to come first. The international student population has grown tremendously on campuses around the world without the proper preparation to accommodate students. On the surface, we have buildings such as the International Living and Learning Center (ILLC) on campus; however, most students report that while the architecture is first-class, it is a space in which the English language is rarely needed outside of the classroom. One student from Macao told me a while ago that she was able to graduate from a four year U.S university without actually speaking English once. When I asked others if that were possible, most South Koreans shrugged and nodded. While funds are often directed towards accommodating international students, the instructors are paid very low and faculty receives little training on working with international students. For instance, the student conduct office is full of plagiarism cases from international students and yet the people who run these offices are in no position to understand the cultural complexities that would propel a Saudi Arabian student to plagiarize. The students undergo a democratic process in which they are granted due process. Due process, however, does not mean anything to a Chinese or Saudi Arabian student. There is a lot of work to be done in terms of effectively accommodating international students on U.S college and university campuses.
There has been a significant shift from the past. Where once international students were embodying the rhetoric and discourse of the state, which throughout the Mass Higher Education Era was comprised of democratic ideologies, the rhetoric has shifted to the embodiment of free market ideology. These neoliberal measures converged globally in the late 1990s, often called the “knowledge economy”. The World Bank and United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the OECD are staunch advocates of international education and promoting “cognitive capitalism” to transform knowledge into engines for economic development (Ward 2012:9). International students, under this new regime, are no longer agents of the state, but rather actors of the free market. What effects does this have on student life? Has this shift from the embodiment of the state to the free market also coincided with frustration educators have espoused about the millennial generation? Does this represent the underlying current in the rise of entitlement? Do students themselves see their education as a product that they are purchasing? If so, how does this epistemological shift influence and shape student life and more importantly, knowledge? These are important research questions that need to be answered, but are outside of the scope of this project. Nonetheless, American higher education is constitutive of the sociopolitical atmosphere of the time, the international educational industry is a highly risky business yet, with a historical perspective, also one of credible resiliency.

**South Korean Context**

The South Korean education system is touted all over the world as success story. Boasting the highest rate of youth attending higher education of all OECD countries
(82%), it is one of the most educated nations to have ever existed\textsuperscript{17}. Almost 75% of South Korean students attend a *haegwon* or cram school\textsuperscript{18}, which is private education after school in order to prepare for the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) or college entrance exam that determines a teenagers future prosperity, including future salary and status. Due to this extreme high-stakes test culture, students are known to spend fourteen hours a day studying for this exam for years\textsuperscript{19} with family members, highly involved as private education represents 75% of all household spending (Seth 2002). The outcome of the exam determines the university in which one can attend and the reputation of the school determines the type of future employment. In other words, the score on the test at the end of high school plays a large role in determining one's class status for a lifetime. It is in this definition of success that South Korean youth are under enormous pressure from an early age.

There have been harsh critics of the education system in the past decade and the pressure to reform the education system continues to build. Korean cultural anthropologist, Cho publicized this in 1996 with her book claiming that society is refusing children and examined the tactics of resistance that youth utilize to push back against the unjust system\textsuperscript{20}. One such way youth have resisted the enormous pressure of testing culture and

\textsuperscript{17} http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2011/11/education-south-korea
\textsuperscript{18} http://www.bbc.com/news/education-25187993
\textsuperscript{19} http://www.koreatimesus.com/s-korea-quiets-down-for-nationwide-college-entrance-exams/

\textsuperscript{20} Cho, Hae-Joang's book "Children Refusing School, Society Refusing Children" (1996) has, unfortunately, never been translated into English. Many older South Koreans are quick to talk about the stir the publication caused.
success, sadly, is to end one's life. Suicide is the leading cause of death for South Korean youth with the highest rates of suicide in the world\textsuperscript{21}. The Korean Health Promotion Foundation\textsuperscript{22} released a survey this year that shows more than half of all South Korean teenagers have experienced suicidal thoughts in the past year, with one out of three people reporting they are suffering from depression. The primary causes reported were school pressure and future uncertainty\textsuperscript{23}. A less extreme tactic is available to families who have enough capital: circumvent the testing culture if one does not test into a desirable university by moving to the U.S. This was reported as the primary reason for mobility in this research.

This lifts some of the pressure of what is commonly known in South Korea as an "inferiority complex" or the unrealistic feeling of general inadequacy\textsuperscript{24} and quickly shifts the pressure to one's English language ability. How fast a student can then get through a language program determines the amount of capital a family needs to invest. In other words, going abroad to study does not alleviate the pressure experienced, but it merely transforms the shape it takes. Depending on the initial language placement test, depends on the length of English study. Finishing language programs as fast as possible is the

\textsuperscript{21} UNICEF: http://www.voicesofyouth.org/posts/student-suicides-in-south-korea
\textsuperscript{22} An Affiliate of the Finance Ministry
\textsuperscript{23} http://blogs.wsj.com/korearealtime/2014/03/20/poll-shows-half-of-korean-teenagers-have-suicidal-thoughts/
\textsuperscript{24} In business and politics, it is commonly known that Korea, as a nation, also has an "inferiority complex" in part because of Japanese colonization. This can be seen in Korea through comparisons of K-Pop and J-Pop, for example. It is also evident when you ask a Korean student about their country. He or she is most likely to cite Japan is a "developed" country and Korea is "developing", despite the fact that the majority of the world considers Korea "developed".
common goal because the program is not only so expensive\textsuperscript{25}, but there is significant parental pressure to invest in university tuition rather than in language.

The most common route that South Korean take is to enter a one-year fast track English language program such as ELS Language Centers\textsuperscript{26} that advertises and has agents all over the peninsula placing youth in schools. ELS Language Centers is partnered with hundreds of universities all over the U.S. There are two tracks available. If a student is able to pass the highest level at the language school, then they are able to circumvent the much dreaded Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) and enter a university direct\textsuperscript{27}. The other path is to reach the advanced level in the language program and with an exit test, enter a community college direct. This is the more common route chosen by South Korean students in my experience. After graduating with a transfer degree from community college, a student is typical able to enter a UC school in California if they can afford it.

\textsuperscript{25} ELS Language Centers charges 2,000 USD per session. One session or level lasts for one month. There are twelve levels to work through before completing. However, it is highly rare that a student is able to pass each level consecutively without repeating specific classes.

\textsuperscript{26} ELS is a multi-million dollar international company all over the world. They are present in 30 states, with some states such as California having six different centers. More often than not, you can find the centers next to major universities as they are partnered with six hundred different universities.

\textsuperscript{27} In my experience, a student is often wholly underprepared for university when this route is taken. The partnership between the language center and the university represents the most important revenue stream for the private corporation. The majority of the instructors as well as students know all too well that the ability to circumvent the TOEFL is the major pull to this company, but too often leaves the student struggling throughout university, particularly in the first two years.
It takes one student to navigate the U.S education system successfully and many others follow. For instance, Dong-woo was the pioneer among his friends in carving out the path. He attended ELS for seven months, passing into the advanced level and exit test. He transferred to a community college down the street and took all the pre-requisite courses needed to transfer to UC Berkeley. Before completing community college, a new major had opened up at UC Berkeley, Environmental Economics, and it was being advertised all over the local community college. Dong-woo quickly changed his major because he thought it would be easier to get accepted into the school. Five years later, twelve South Korean men, who have been friends since language school, have graduated with degrees from UC Berkeley in Environmental Economics. Seong-pyo explains, "We could not have done this without Dong-woo's skills first. We could follow him and then all the tests, papers, and everything for us is the same. We could all get benefits." It is very important for South Korean international students to rely on their groups of friends for support in navigating the U.S educational system in order to maintain hope of bypassing the entanglement of higher education and class in South Korea.

However, this path of circumventing the Korean higher education system comes with little guarantee, especially since it is now a road well-traveled. Increasingly in the past two years, politicians, such as the former president Myung-bak Lee, have expressed concern with the nation’s glut of graduates. Over one third of South Korea’s unemployed youth have university diplomas as have 30% of the country’s six million non-regular
workers. However, the calculation of the unemployment rate in South Korea is controversial. The reported rate of youth unemployment is 6.4%, which is a lot lower than most countries. However, the data excludes people who are under thirty years old without a job. When this demographic is included, the youth unemployment rate jumps to nearly 22%. The unemployment landscape for youth with university degrees is one of uncertainty.

One of the reasons there are few desirable jobs in South Korea is the market’s reliance on the chaebol or large conglomerates such as Samsung, Hyundai, or LG (Kil & Moon 2010). Entering one of south Korea’s top universities is the only way one can secure a position at a chaebol job, but only 6% of all jobs in Korea are chaebol jobs as the majority of them are hiring overseas (Chang 2003). This is the single narrative of success in Korea and for many, it is failing. The nation has begun to offer companies incentives to hire people outside of those who have top-tiered university degrees. The main impetus a rapidly aging society and few job positions available to this generation who must work in order to support the elderly. This has not stopped families from encouraging their children to work towards scoring high on the entrance exam in order to increase the likelihood of working for a chaebol, the ultimate vision of success.

Jae-hyun, one of two students in this study, had quit their jobs at a chaebol and decided to study abroad. He explained to me that his friends thought he had accomplished the

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ultimate success and yet he was unsatisfied with his life because there was nothing outside of work and he had “…lost his passions.” Jee-hye, the other person, explained that she did not realize for many years what the actual goal was that she was working towards. She said that she continued to push herself in the direction of this success narrative because there is…“nothing better in Korea than to be thin and work for a big company”. After almost a full decade of working, she walked away from this vision of success because she was so stressed from the daily grind. She explains:

When I was working at Samsung, I felt really tired and I was no longer happy. When I got a job, I was really proud of myself firstly. Everyone knew I was working for a really big company. Secondly, the income was really high. But, then, after a few years, I kind of became, well, I began thinking about my life. Where was my life? Not in the company. Not in the house. What do I have to get married now? That is it? This is life? So two years before I came to the U.S, I made a plan to save money for a big trip. Then, I did and I quit my job! People still think I have a mental disorder now but I don’t care. I am happy.

Ju highlights that her motivations were outside of herself and in the eyes of others for many years. This was not enough to sustain her. However, the present condition in South Korea is characterized by future uncertainty and many try to negotiate this uncertainty by temporarily sidestepping the whole game by moving to the United States. The narrative South Korea youth hear daily is that all of the hard work put into studying will pay off in the end when children grow up to be successful. However, most jobs offered do not require years of schooling and to present schooling as a means to offer a job is to set up tension and frustrations that give way to disillusionment (Standing 2011).
“...the simplification of these many forces (and fears) of homogenization can also be exploited by nation-states in relation to their own minorities, by posing global commoditization (or capitalism, or some other external enemy) as more real than the threat of its own hegemonic strategies” (Appadurai 1996:32)

Appadurai’s quote aptly fits the agenda of the ruling class in Saudi Arabia. They are interested in curbing extremism as is evident from the scores of political prisoners in the Kingdom\(^\text{30}\) to a certain extent; however, the images of “the West” are highly controlled, monitored, and managed to represent and depict an external threat to the Wahhabi way of life. This is precisely how the Al Saud family has maintained its power since the founding of the country. After the events of September 11th, however, the United States would divert any public attention away from Saudi Arabia, while pressuring the ruling family to make significant changes to curb extremism. Mostly cosmetic changes occurred to school curricula, anyone who had interacted with certain extremists were disappeared, and funding for any Wahhabi projects continued to be shifted abroad.

The King Abdullah scholarship program was launched as a joint effort between the Kingdom and the G.W Bush administration with the intent to smooth over and even

\(^{30}\) Political prisoners in the Kingdom are also dissidents. However, it is important to note that the list of militant “terroristic” attacks within the Kingdom is very long. In order to protect the “special relationship” news about Saudi Arabia in the U.S is highly monitored and censored in order to do business as usual.
deepen the long-standing relationship that had been damaged albeit internally\(^{31}\). The scholarship program is a massive undertaking that is both globally and historically unparalleled. In part, the program was created to improve U.S-Saudi relations in the post-911 era to attempt to reduce negative Saudi Arabian perceptions of the United States. Bush and Abdullah launched the massive program in 2005 when the throne was taken and the Kingdom now spends $1,922 per capita on education, the majority of this spent in the United States\(^{32}\).

Saudi Arabian students are highly aware of their role as political projects of the state. All Saudi students report that they have been tasked with the role of creating social change back home and it is their job to represent their country in a better light abroad. One of the interview questions I asked everyone was, “Why was SACM created?” Although the opinions varied, they were all highly political. Here is an example of the dialogue:

M: It is about politics.
L: What do you mean?
M: The economic benefits in the U.S from Saudi students is huge. Billions. I think this affected the economy in the U.S, especially in small areas and small cities here where there are universities. Like Pocatello, Idaho. There is nothing there, but Saudis! Haha!
L: Haha. Yeah. That is true.
M: The U.S has so many students from Saudi. I think this is based on the political relationship between Saudi and the U.S. One of my opinions is that maybe the

\(^{31}\) Internally here refers to the U.S government. The public relations campaign that the Bush administration ran about September 11th continues to be a huge success. One result are the numerous polls showing Americans misunderstanding about which country the hijackers were from, with the majority indicating Iraq.

\(^{32}\) To put this into perspective the United States spends $223 per capita on education (http://global.psu.edu/info/academics-research/global-engagement-network/regional-resources/regional-resources-saudi-arab-1).
United States pushed the government to make this program to make sure that people become open-minded and do not care about terrorists in the country especially after September 11th. I think it is related because it came the same time as when the U.S. changed and intervened some of the religion classes in Saudi Arabia, I mean to delete some topics.

L: What topics were deleted?
M: About jihad, for example. To minimize the topic in classes not like before when you had to focus on jihad, but now focusing on how beautiful the life is now.

L: So you think the United States....
M: Yes. I saw this in the newspaper and online because all these changes happened right after Sept 11th.

L: Does the U.S understand the topic that were taken out of the education?
M: I think they are afraid. I believe that they are Americanizing the world and they know about the Saudi economic situation and the unemployment here is a threat to have people doing nothing.

Mohammed’s explanation shows not only the cognizance about the larger picture, but also indicates that boredom, stemming from unemployment, among youth is a threat to the stability of the country. Youth unemployment has become a high concern for many countries in the world as evident by the Arab Spring. Sending droves of students to receive an education rather than spending time being bored has become, for the first time, a concern for the Ministry of Defense. Mohammed explains that this is another primary reason that the scholarship program was created. With an unemployment rate spiraling out of control, this has become a pacifying solution to otherwise perceived unrest.

Mohammed explains:

Uh...I think...Haha...I have many ideas. It is not really King Abdullah, but the government. They need people to be more open-minded. When they travel, they will become more open-minded so they will not focus on terrorism. When you are unemployed, you have no objectives or targets in your life so you have no goals. so you might think you want to exploit things and go to Afghanistan. There is no life and you are not living a

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33 This is further examined in Chapter 6.
34 This is precisely what has been happening recently in Syria.
good life. Unemployed people had another chance to improve themselves through the scholarship

Saudi Arabian students are highly aware of their own positionalities and all of the people in this study explained that the government is interested in controlling their mindset and the ways in which they approach the world. Embedded in the youth’s consciousness are strategies and tactics that are far from being either regulated or eliminated by the panoptic administration (DeCerteau 1984:96). Foucault called these maneuvers, “minor instrumentalities” that are only equipped to coopt multiplicities back into the power structure of the disciplinary society (96-97). However, the minor instrumentalities are diverse and popular, often manifesting in scapes in the form of Internet and satellite television. Social media websites are extremely popular among the youth in Saudi Arabia and have contributed to growing awareness; House (2012) explains that “these young people are aware of government inefficiency and princely corruption, and of the fact that 40 percent of Saudis live in poverty and at least 60 percent cannot afford a home”. They also know that 90% of all employees in the private sector are foreigners who are often exploited for low wages (2012: 5). In the past five years, the government has created only 50,000 jobs, while the private sector developed 2.5 million jobs - all of which have overwhelmingly gone to foreigners (2012: 5). Efforts to “Saudize” the economy have been implemented over the past decade, but to no avail; economists estimate that the unemployment rate outside of the Kingdom continues to hover around 40 percent35. Why does the Kingdom continue to import all the foreign labor at the expense of erasing their

35 These estimates exclude women. As of 2000, 5.5% of Saudi working age women were employed, representing about 270,000 people (Yamani 2000:76).
middle class? “Labor is imported to perform functions that its own citizens are neither educated nor enterprising enough to perform” (House 2012:160). This seems quite harsh, however, the Saudi Minister of Labor acknowledges that Saudis are not qualified for the jobs they want and refuse jobs for which they are qualified36. In the light of the harsh political economic conditions, the stated mission of the scholarship program is relevant: “to provide our country with qualified individuals capable of achieving the country's goals of progress and development”37. The prescribed boundaries of power restrict the disciplines of study in which they will accept and those that they will not. In navigating this risk minefield of employment, Saudi students are quick to drop their undergraduate majors in history and pursue one of the accepted majors: engineering, chemistry, business, and economics. The very production of knowledge and what is learned is controlled38. Any sense of agency is only implemented through the narrow field that is already proscribed. There is no doubt that the neoliberal reforms in Saudi Arabia have intensified the perceived risks that then fuel actions to study abroad. This is one tactic employed to circumnavigate this increasingly difficult neoliberal landscape for both the ruling class and the student body they are disciplining to grow the manufacturing sector

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36 This explains, to some extent, why there is not one Saudi waiter, garbage collector, street cleaner, or domestic worker in the entire country. It also explains how it is possible to go from the airport to checking into a hotel without once interacting with a Saudi citizen. One of my friends explained to me that it is not only about entitlement and maintenance of the status of family names, but also about the internalization of Euro-American domination. He said that Saudi’s themselves believe that “white people can do a better job”. Clearly this whole concept needs further inquiry.
37 http://www.sacm.org/AboutSACM/Mission.aspx
38 It is important to note the very same dynamic is occurring in the United States as well.
to decrease its dependence on the United States and mitigate the risk of living in a post-petroleum economy\textsuperscript{39}.

It is also important to note that the shift in the constructions of time that occur in a risk society where the past no longer is perceived to be indicative of the present while the present is understood as a constructed fiction (Beck 1999:137). This theoretical framework generates an understanding of another grave risk perception embedded in the consciousness of every Saudi Arabian both young and old: succession of power.

Historically jumping from brother to brother and with King Abdullah’s age\textsuperscript{40} and infirmities, the throne will, for the first time, pass to the new generation of princes (House 2012: 8). The subconscious\textsuperscript{41} of the Saudi populace is in constant negotiation in this world risk society: between chronic unemployment, restless youth, octogenarian leadership, religious extremism and division, sociopolitical division, “troublesome” neighbors, a shortage of food and water, and a flawed education system, risks “are the whip used to keep the present day moving along at a gallop” (Beck 1999:137). It could be argued that this society drenched in perceived risks also guided both the ruling class and the Saudi people’s reaction to the Arab Spring. The literature all refers to the

\textsuperscript{39} An internal document obtained by Wikileaks and published by The Guardian in February 2011 showed that Saudi Arabia has overstated the petroleum reserves by over 40%: http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/feb/08/saudi-oil-reserves-overstated-wikileaks
\textsuperscript{40} August 1, 1924
\textsuperscript{41} I use this word here in the Freudian sense: information that flitters back and forth between the forefront of conscious thought as well as the backdrop of behavior and actions. It complements Beck’s notion of risk perception.
gerontocracy\textsuperscript{42} handing out billions of dollars to acquiesce the population as the Shiite minority in Qatif began to stir and the people were paralyzed with fear at the thought of leaving political decisions up to men and not Allah is unthinkably risky (House 2012: 9, Lippman 2012: 58). While there is much truth to these factors, it is also important to include the risks that turned into hazards in 2003. People lived through three years of shoot-outs between Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups fighting the Saudi state. The people did not relish the prospect of more violence and the jails were filled with political prisoners (Lippman 2012: 10). It is under these risks and hazards that the status quo is maintained and people look to the state not for “freedoms”, but rather for religious guidance to promote a culture of obedience that instills stability and continuity (ibid:13). Even the reform advocates in no way are promoting a toppling of the system such as in Egypt, but rather to open up the existing system without displacing it. King Abdullah clearly hopes to mitigate these omnipresent risks and the plan of the scholarship program is for the returnees to lead the way. Whether ranging from the need for engineers to create new desalination plants or to educate the youth abroad, this is all done in the name of preserving the Al Saud family who have been struggling to maintain power for two centuries before the Kingdom even was established (Lacey2009:145). All of these imminently real virtualities are the product of “...unintended consequences of the logic of control which dominates modernity” (Beck 1999:139). When modernity is at large, the nation-state plays a delicate role in becoming the arbiter of global flows or what Appadurai (1996) called “repatriation of difference” (42). It is in this light that modernity

\textsuperscript{42} This is a new vocabulary word that was added to the dictionary in 2009 in reference to the ailing dictators of the region before the Arab Spring.
is produced through enormous friction and ascribed onto the body of the student. In this risk society, it seems as if this new cadre of students abroad is an attempt to diversify the “singularly inappropriate” vocabulary employed to deal with “modern catastrophes and manufactured insecurities” (Appadurai 1996:150).
"Two species of capital now give access to positions of power, define the structure of social space, and govern the life chances and trajectories of groups and individuals: economic capital and cultural capital. ~ Wacquant (1996, p. x)

This section will begin to situate student migration as a particular form of migration in the existing literature by proposing a new framework of international students as educational migrants. Taking a more holistic approach and broader perspective, the new framework moves away from some hallmarks of existing migration theory and is the result of creating a space for the emergence of the student voice. Tracing the migratory trajectory, the reasons propelling mobility are explored in this chapter and the results from the initial pilot study are presented.

Transnational migration scholarship in the United States has been shaped by its critique of the unilinear assimilationist paradigm of classical migration research. Obsolete notions of migration conjure up images of uprooted people who have undergone one-way movement conceptualized too often as permanent rupture. These images have too often informed the thinking of western scholars, particularly North American ones whose consciousness tends towards this model based on the antiquated Ellis Island approach to the study of migration. In the early 1990’s, the generative work of Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) began to unfold a new theoretical framework in which to approach migration - one that points out lives do not start and stop at borders, but rather
“cut across national boundaries and bring societies into a single social field” (1). The pioneer of this research, anthropologist Nina Glick Schiller (1991, 1992), primarily focused on developing an updated theoretical framework that began to make sense of migration under the conditions of neoliberal global capitalism.

Theoretically, transborder migration more adequately describes educational migration. Moving away from traditional conceptions of migration, transnationalism is a process under which the people - transmigrants - are provided the space to be autonomous and embedded agents that are connected to a larger social network. Transnationalism, as defined by Glick Schiller (1992) is “the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (1). Expanding the paradigm of transnationalism and including the lens of transborder migration includes the perspective of people continually create and recreate boundaries, moving, trading, and communicating across them, thereby making fluidity and change a part of all human social formations and processes. The connections carved and established across borders are responsible for propelling student mobility as much as any other factor. While education remains important, it is necessary to understand that it is a vehicle and the sociocultural goals are much broader.

The term “international” assumes the governing activity of one nation-state dealing with another nation-state. This has the tendency to erase the agency of people who engage in everyday behavior that transcend borders. In other words, the nation-state container view of society does not capture the complex interconnectedness of contemporary reality.
While transmigrants are indeed subjected to a number of hegemonic contexts of nation-states, including universities, they are also able to reshape the contexts through behavior and redefine them. Daily enactments and behavior are not confined within, but rather transcend borders. This ranges from money that is sent home in the form of a remittance to signifying to a barista at a South Korean cafe that you have been educated in U.S by simply asking for ‘half-n-half’ rather than ‘cream’. Thus, transborder migration assumes that there is an inseparability of a person from place, displacing antiquated notions of international.

One of the major premises that marks Glick Schiller’s framework of transnationalism is the wide range of identity constructs a person may possess. She explicates, “transnational migrants – although predominantly workers - live a complex existence that forces them to confront, draw upon, and rework different identity constructs - national, ethnic, and racial” (1992:5). It is clear that educational migrants - although engaged in a wide range of activities that constitute labor (i.e. studying) - fit this lens. Although typically entering the country on an F-1 student visa, people not only move in and out of “student” status constantly, but they also occupy many roles and weave in and out of various identities in the United States such as mothers and fathers, employees and employers, union labor activists, consumers, students, and smokers. In other words, the identity marker of being a student represents merely one facet in the lives of ‘international students’. This was a strong theme that emerged from the interviews. One such false demarcation that was uncovered was the line constructed between worker and student. Additionally, educational migrants rarely talked about themselves in the context of school, university
or campus. It became clear that I would have to ask questions about the educational side of their identities in order to switch to the identity construct or role as a student. In other words, individuals - despite their intentions - perceive themselves as people living in a new community rather than solely as a student. However, it is clear that the host community sees itself very much as a host with visitors and the difference in this knowledge represents the heart of much tension and friction experienced. In other words, international students perceive themselves as part of the community, living their lives in important ways, while the host community sees them as impermanent and trivial visitors or tourists.

The line remains blurred between the migrant as a student and the migrant as a worker in need of paying for the increasing tuition prices. I think it is impossible and unnecessary to draw the line between student and worker in order to understand the multiple subjectivities that occur throughout the whole migration process. The backdrop of this, however, is that when education has shifted to be treated as a commodity, with the university structure accommodating and perpetuating the shift, the whole process of migration pushes students to be workers. Studying, then, remains one form of labor that students engage in. Just as this is true for domestic students, it remains a concern for international students. International students often apply for social security cards that allow them to buy an iPhone at a cheaper price as well as find legal paid work on campus. Additionally, among my participants approximately one-third of students had experience working off campus at some point, the majority getting paid under the table in restaurants. This is an example of how studying and activities that support it are a form of
labor and, thus, being a student remains but one mode of identity. Student status is one that “international students” actually fall in and out of constantly, which is another reason that directly challenges the term. Ju, for instance, complicates this. We were sitting in a café in San Francisco’s Little Italy when I asked her, “Are you an international student?” She - without hesitation - replied, “No, I am not”. I paused to give her the necessary space to think about this. She hesitated and then filled the space:

I have moved my life here. Being a student is one small part. It is how I came actually. But, this is not one hundred percent comfortable too, you know? If I were more comfortable speaking English, I would feel better than I do now. But having a job or being a student or even buying a house, like me, these are things that anyone can do with money. It is not about the certifications. You have to feel like you really live here. I have to work here, play here, live my daily life here as a person, have a family here. I need some stronger reasons than the ones I have at this time. I have to fit in and feel like I am here. Then I will be a seven, but I remain a five.

The five she is referring to is on the semantic differential scale in front of her asking her about her subjective experience of transnational educational migration (see Chapter 1). Ju initially came here for “a trip” and to escape her old job at Samsung that had dominated her life in South Korea. Like the majority of educational migrants, she had never intended to stay as long as she had let alone marry a Chinese American man and start a family. This was not a part of her plan. However, this is demonstrative of the fact that international students are inherently undergoing a migratory experience - one that is constituted by uncertainty and requires the strength to be both open and flexible. Only recently have the multiple subjectivities of international students been theorized - not empirically documented. Raghuram, a human geographer, stated, “They [students] are never just that [students], they are tourists, settlers, migrants, and ‘transnational
wannabes’ (Raghuram 2012:141). While this would not be my choice of words, the point is international students possess multiple, fall in and out of, and acquire new subjectivities throughout their educational migration.

Simultaneity, or living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally continues to be an area warranting further research exploration. People experiencing and becoming familiar with a new place and transnational connections to a homeland or to dispersed networks of family, compatriots, or persons who share a religious or ethnic identity often occur at the same time and always reinforce one another. Postcolonial scholarship, models, and visions desperately need to be applied to this unique type of migration, which in turn can facilitate the generation of better policies as well as inform the public perception.

The narrow linguistic connotation of the term ‘international student’ hinges on the predominant assumptions outlined above. The connotation of this term on and off university campuses is so powerful that it has driven policy that may be better adapted by the term transnational educational migrants. Madelyn Iris, in the collected work Applying Anthropology in a Global Village, defined transnational immigration as “…relocation that crosses national boundaries, whether permanent or temporarily” (2012:173). It is necessary to incorporate educational migrants under the umbrella of immigration, migration theory and policy in order to accurately situate and accommodate this burgeoning population at local, national, and global levels.
Out of the twenty-four participants (n=24) in this research, one individual has obtained U.S citizenship, one individual is currently waiting for her greencard, one individual was deported and took up permanent residence in New Zealand, four people who returned home have come back for a graduate degree and one individual has successfully established transnational employment. Those who have undergone return migration also report that since they have experienced this educational migration they are much more likely to not only travel, but also move in the future. *Mobility begets mobility.*

‘International students’ themselves are highly aware of their positionality and yet universities, governments and the public imagination lag far behind.\(^{(43)}\)

Despite the perceptions of the host community, every participant in this study used the word "home" to describe their migration abroad. Additionally, when the grammar is studied from the transcripts, it becomes clear that international students do not “feel home”, but rather “are home”. The complicated concept of “home” is an important one to explore in a global era. Samiyah explains that when her sister came to visit her, she found herself defending her home, Santa Cruz, in the face of their recent visit to Los Angeles.

> My sister did not like Santa Cruz. She thought there were dirty people everywhere. I explained, “You just came from a rich area in L.A! These people are not dirty! They are friendly!” I was defending my home in Santa Cruz. I did not want to hear any bad things about this place. If she said something about L.A, then I did not care, but I realized that I did not want to hear any bad adjectives about my home.

\(^{(43)}\) A quick search of “international student” on Google brings up phrases such as “cash cows” and “foreigners”. The public perception, in my experience, has been wholly shaped by media attention that is highly negative of international students unless being spoken of in the context of profit margins and revenue. Additionally, when I speak with people who are from the United States about my research, the majority of people want to immediately know if “those people are staying”.
Samiyah has spent three years in the United States so far. The first year and a half she spent studying the English language in Santa Cruz and now she lives in Los Angeles where she is currently finishing up her graduate degree in Computer Science. When asked to reflect on her positionality on the semantic differential scale, she laments:

My days spent here, this is my home. It is difficult to keep everything to live like bills, apartment, you know, daily life. But, I would like to be a tourist again. I see how this is possible because I am at the end of my degree now. I noticed that I stopped investing as much now because I am leaving. But, when I lived in Santa Cruz, I was a six [referring to scale], but the immigration would always remind me, ‘You are not home here!” We both laugh. I add, “So the law and your feeling are different?” She quickly replied, “Haha! Yes! Of course! I have to check in with them. The school is always contacting with them. Why do I have to check in? They are always following me!

Samiyah’s sentiment towards the complicated concept of ‘home’ represents a prominent pattern expressed. Transnational educational migrants are highly aware of their expanding concept of home and how this sentiment is often in direct conflict with the state. This has put the university, community colleges, and language schools at the heart of this friction; professors and teachers have become mandatory reporters of attendance, representing the most distant arm of the U.S government’s international student tracking/surveillance project, the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS\textsuperscript{44}). It is an online database that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) monitors the whereabouts and "...has an interest in information on non- immigrants whose primary reason for coming to the United States is to be students". In light of

\textsuperscript{44} For more information, including a visual image of the program, see http://epic.org/privacy/surveillance/spotlight/0905/
immigration policy, students are considered a benign category of "non-immigrants" due to their perceived impermanence and class status. While the term "non-immigrant" connotes benevolence, it is misleading to how the students characterize themselves.

**Reasons Propelling Student Mobility**

There is a wide spectrum of experiences that shape migratory subjectivities. Like all nuanced forms, characterizing student migration is quite hard and attempting to represent different subjectivities and experiences of the mobility is important yet it should be said that is inconceivable. However, the international student presence is growing and beckoning to be understood. In this simplifications occur as the result of patterns in the data and this needs to be stated aloud; generalizing beyond appropriate and justifiable limits is a failure of the imagination. It should be noted that this chapter is written from the position of someone who deeply knows the U.S politics and discourse that surround the international student population and the tone of the composition purposefully writes directly against this dominant paradigm. Writing against the dominant narrative begins with dispelling the proclivity to view international students through the already known narrative that follows the Ellis Island version of migration. In other words, send me your huddled masses is not the dynamic unfolding, but rather a much more nuanced paradigm must emerge.

“Theorizing spatialities of knowledge production alongside those of migration can help in understanding the specificities of student migration” (139). Raghuram (2012) points to the importance of knowledge production in global circulation as an additional lens that
must be included in student migratory analyses. While education is *not* the only reason for travel, it does represent a necessary precondition for travelling. Places, spaces, and institutions must be theorized as they extend across sites in migrant categories and they are absolutely felt most significantly in the lived experiences. With the diversity in the conditions that propel student mobility, contextualizing and situating the mobility becomes of increasing importance. Knowledge production is often treated as incidental in the literature, and while it does remain a salient feature, it cannot alone explain student migration.

Raghuram (2012), Professor of Human Geography at Open University in the U.K, poses the question of “How hard is it to situate students?”, concluding that it is very hard. On the one hand, space is often conceived as something that is preexistent - falsely divided between sending and receiving countries. On the other hand, space is perceived in the flows and connections similar to Appadurai’s (1996) - scapes. When place is rooted in the former, the implications for policy become clearly delineated as immutable and sacrosanct with migration representing an incursion. This is why conceptualizing space and including a spatial analysis is so crucial. In moving away from neoclassical theories of push and pull factors, a sphere of complex and coexisting multiplicities emerges.

In this section the diverse reasons propelling mobility will be explored. I have broken them down into five patterned variables unearthed from research: 1) the self-project 2)  

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educational contexts 3) political projects of the state 4) the family 5) precariousness or precarity and 6) cultural citizenship.

A former student/friend of mine, Abdulrahman called me from a local 541 area code despite the fact that he was in Riyadh. I was so surprised to hear his voice on the other end of the line. Here is a snippet of the conversation to show the fallacy of characterizing student mobility in terms of neoclassical economics - a predominant theme in the existing literature.

L: How is the napkin business?
D: Good, good. Thank you. My “Lauren” line of tissue was successful and I made a lot of money from your name! Haha...
L: Haha...good. I am happy to help. Are you planning on staying to continue the business?
D: No..I have news for you. I will be at your house in August. Please tell Josh.
L: My house?! Where did you get accepted?!
D: Wisconsin, but I will come to Washington D.C, to San Francisco, and then to Oregon before.
L: Dhoom that is great! Congratulations! I did not know you were planning to come back here because I know your business is doing well. How are you feeling about this?
D: Yes, at this point I would come to Alaska. I do not care where. I am too young to be successful and living like this so I will study. Anywhere, I don’t care.

The benefits of student migration are too often couched in such narrow terms such as “English proficiency, employability or career growth, wage maximization, and security of citizenship” (Raghuram 2012: 142). While there are necessary precursors and pretexts in the ability to navigate neoliberal economic conditions, there are a diversity of reasons propelling the migration and thus, the experience remains at the heart of the lacunae that inform not only the literature, but should also be at the core of generating local and national policy. Abdulrahman chose to give up a successful attempt at his own company
after he finished his undergraduate degree and yet an idea of prolonging his youth is more important to him.

The fun, excitement, and escape from the familiar are equally valid reasons propelling student mobility and migration. The role of the imagination evident is wholly understated in the literature and even in the beginning of interviews or relationships. When international students are asked why they have decided to study in the United States, the answer of obtaining good employment back home is almost always perfunctorily repeated in the same cultural way that Americans always ask how one another are doing without fully engaging in the answer. While future employment remains an important factor in propelling mobility, the repetition of this answer perpetuates neoliberal assumptions of education and the more recent purpose of higher education. Henry Giroux aptly critiques this:

Neoliberalism has put an enormous effort into creating a commanding cultural apparatus and public pedagogy in which individuals can only view themselves as consumers, embrace freedom as the right to participate in the market, and supplant issues of social responsibility for an unchecked embrace of individualism and the belief that all social relation be judged according to how they further one’s individual needs and self-interests46.

The university structure has gradually transformed into a neoliberal model in which both domestic and international students more often than not view themselves as clientele or consumers of education not only because of the environment in which they were raised, but also because this is precisely the lens in which they are viewed by the university

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administration\textsuperscript{47}, leaving little room for capturing the experience espoused by Abdulrahman that is representative of a lot of students. When one's "clientele" is epistemologically perceived as a homogeneous population, which, above all, aims to further their own individual needs and self-interests as they are consumers of learning\textsuperscript{48}. This is perceived as the main reason international students come to the United States and then they will return. However, close relationships with people soon fully uncover other realms and levels of consciousness such as people’s personal hopes, cultural goals, aspirations, and imaginations in propelling migration. Sanah and Sujin, Saudi Arabian woman and a South Korean woman separately highlight and reinforce this notion.

Sanah

You know before I came here, I had a good job. I quit because I did not like it and I do not really care about money. I like studying. It is a passion. I quit and my family and friends was so upset about it and they remind me everytime I talk with them about my good job and my good salary. They remind me you were younger and you will never get this same job when you return. They all remind me this, but I feel even if they are right, I do not care.

Sujin

\textsuperscript{47} Faculty, then, are typically left to grapple with the students and tensions that arise are often associated with a generation gap rather than a deeper analysis of an entrepreneurial university.

\textsuperscript{48} Much in this sentence needs to be problematized, but it truly represents the entry point of many programs that allegedly cater to the international student population. It is also telling about the need for increased public dialogue and discussion on the purposes of higher education in general as this is not in any way a unique claim on international students, but the consumption of education or education as product equally pertains to domestic students.
When I was working at Samsung, I felt really tired and no longer happy. I mean, when I got that job I was really happy and proud of myself firstly. Everyone knew I was working for a really big company and secondly, the income was really high, but then after a few years I became, well, I started to think about my life. Where was my life? Not in the company, not in my house. What was left? I have to get married now? Is this really the life? So for two years before I came here, I made a plan to save money for this big trip and then I did it! I quit!

Both Sanah and Sujin make it clear that their reasons propelling their mobility to the United States have little to do with any economic rationale of leaving high paying jobs, especially in both Saudi Arabia and South Korea where the employment for women is, at best, precariously uneven. However, contributing to their own biographies\(^{49}\) and the role of their imagination create the determination and motivation that propels the mobility. In an effort to de-routinize the mundane, the do-it-yourself biography moves to the forefront in motivation\(^{50}\).

*Precarity and Cultural Capital*

Student mobility here is not immune to social inequalities, but rather is co-constitutive in the process of student migration, representing a new kind of class-making project of global capitalism. Ulrich Beck eloquently argued that in modern society, risk exposure becomes the underlying organizing principle replacing class as the primary inequality (1992, 2002). If risk, by definition is a power game, then powerful actors or agents are unable to avoid risk; however, they are able to maximize risks for ‘others’ while minimizing risks for themselves. This is illustrative in theorizing student migration. In an


\(^{50}\) Reference to both Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens conceptualizations of reflexive modernity and individualization.
era of, at best, precarious economic conditions, people are very much engaged in utilizing cultural resources for self-making and acquiring techniques of self-production\textsuperscript{51}. This is another reason underlying student mobility. International students propel themselves in a space of mobility in order to position themselves in another sphere in which to acquire additional cultural capital\textsuperscript{52} to minimize and offset future risks that are inherent in conditions of precarity\textsuperscript{53}.

Precarity\textsuperscript{54} attempts to represent a holistic political economic perspective that incorporates an understanding of the psychology of shifting subjectivities of the lived experiences of ambient insecurity. Although the majority of the processes are adverse, it is necessary to note that the concept is not wholly negative as a kind of “positive” emerges in the sense that there are different types of opportunities of the self-project or biographies\textsuperscript{55}, often requiring a degree of social and geographic mobility\textsuperscript{56}. An article in the New Yorker from 2009 illustrates the use of the term *precarity* to explain the lived experience, particularly the uncertainty that is a result of neoliberal policy. The concept

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51} Ulrich Beck has argued that the changing logic of distribution in reflexive modernity has replaced the concept of social class in this sense.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Cultural capital is used here as defined by Bourdieu (1988) as forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person acquires. I would like to point out that the use of this term also includes symbolic capital - the resources available to an individual on the basis of honor, prestige, or reputation. Since we are discussing intangible forms of capital, I find it useful to combine these two as most of cultural capital is symbolic anyway. One may study at Harvard and come away with a degree knowing very little, for instance.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Chapter 6 explores this in more depth.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Sometimes referred to as precariousness.
\item \textsuperscript{55} These biographies, though, are promoted through the basis of individualism as Ulrich Beck (1992, 2002) notes.
\item \textsuperscript{56} http://thenewinquiry.com/blogs/marginal-utility/precarity-and-affective-resistance/
\end{itemize}
emphasizes the subjective shift people undergo in labor conditions in which the state has disinvested, offloading the responsibility of “maintaining a minimum standard of well-being for the citizens, while corporations simultaneously shift as much risk as possible to the workers.” Living under the conditions of precarity, then, often create an environment where migration is both a necessity and applauded. International students are highly aware of the precarity underlying their own personal mobility.

Mobility is a risky decision that arises out of precarity. Not only is the global imaginary prevalent and people who risk placelessness and succeed are rewarded in an era of global capitalism, but also a new sense of desperation in the attempt to reproduce the middle class status. This is precisely the habitus in which the large majority of international students were raised, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to recreate in a time characterized by precarity and risk. Attempting to recreate and reproduce the habitus in which one grew up in is one of the main underlying factors propelling student migration and mobility globally. If the hallmark of this era is the increased movement of people and

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It is necessary to point out that there are always exceptions to such a generalized statement. The King Abdullah scholarship program is open for any Saudi Arabian citizen to apply for, which facilitates people who would otherwise not be able to consider higher education. Still, however, it is important to note that there is a tremendous amount of class privilege possessed by Saudi Arabian students as well as South Korean students studying in the United States. Having said that, the stereotypes of international students as rich kids who drive expensive cars is one that is set by very few and hurts the image of all international students.
things, then, in theorizing the absence of movement or the ability to stay put in one place, becomes a different kind of privileged position people occupy, one unattainable even for the moderately affluent. In other words, only the very wealthy can afford to stay still and when they do engage in mobility, it is fully a choice. The majority of people, including the moderately affluent, have to keep up with the trend of what technique and strategy will enable the acquisition of enough cultural capital in order to maximize opportunities, offsetting risk and, in the context of education, this sometimes requires mobility.

Precarity and its interaction with cultural capital remains a primary reason for undergoing an educational migration. Whether it is one’s ability to acquire tangible skills (i.e. how to utilize a new cutting edge software program) or intangible assets (i.e. the reputation of being a global citizen with the perception of being highly educated), cultural capital continues to be the primary reason that the people in my sample have engaged in international mobility. Won Hyeok explains, “Haha...you know, Lauren! If I did not come to study and make my way in the U.S, then at home I would be cleaning my parents’ restaurant!” Won Hyeok has a degree from a decent university in South Korea and his parents own a nice restaurant that I have visited, but if this were to be the basis of his future employment in the context of Korean culture, it would be impossible for him to recreate the middle class background he seeks to accomplish and this includes finding a partner from a similar background and he explains that this is not a possibility unless he is able to work for a large corporation. Migrating, then, is not a choice in Won Hyeok’s experience. Instead it is a mode of self-preservation. It is in this pressure that he must strategize and invest in techniques of self-production, spending seven years in the U.S
order to maximize his ability to navigate, negotiate, and even circumvent the neoliberal landscape of Korean employment options.

Saudi Arabians find themselves in similar positions as there are not too many avenues of employment in the Kingdom, especially ones that are available to youth. As of 2008, roughly two thirds of all workers employed in the Kingdom were foreigners, and in the private sector approximately 90% (House 2012: 157). Recent efforts to “Saudize” the economy include sending youth abroad to study and return to help diversify the economic base outside of the oil sector. This has been challenging since the second largest export, after petrol and petrol products, remain luxury goods and the majority of youth remain unemployed (2012: 158). Many Saudi Arabians seek to study abroad to avoid the precarious labor conditions that currently make up the Kingdom’s economic frontier. The majority of the people involved in the King Abdullah scholarship program59 are, now, receiving a salary in the United States as a student that they will most likely not be able to reproduce upon obtaining future employment. Saudi Arabians studying in the United States are highly cognizant and concerned about this dynamic, another reason contributing to student mobility; there are high hopes of acquiring enough cultural capital abroad in order to reproduce a more middle class quality of life, one that is now systemic available to fewer and fewer. Hussam explains the difficulty in trying to maintain the

59 The Kingdom has an organization in Washington D.C - across from the CIA headquarters - called the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) in which the $1,800 per student, per month salary is allocated from. Benefits are also allocated such as top of the line healthcare plans, stipends for tests such as TOEFL and IELTS are reimbursed as well as plane tickets for visitations once a year.
standard quality of life. Originally in the U.S to accompany his wife and to care for their
daughter who was born in California, he has taken two years of language courses and is
now majoring in criminal justice while she is in a doctoral program.

I think the hard things for us to find jobs that have same salary as now.
This is the most important thing. Find a job. If we have a job, you know in
my country, we can have another woman from another country come and
cook, clean, and do everything so if we have a job its good. We can have
another baby and relax. This is why studying is the first line to cross. It is
so hard now in my country. But, my wife is so smart. If she cannot find a
job in my country, I will look for another country. No problem.

Hussam also alludes to another common theme that after the initial student migration,
international students often report they will engage in more mobility in the future if they
have the opportunity. There seems to be a consistent valorization of mobility and
transnational dwellings that is characterized by dominant cultural narratives. In the
current milieu, it is important to both look busy and be on the move. However, the
conditions pushing people to migrate and the push to maintain connections to the currents
of modernity have many people caught up in a deterritorialization of the global60 that is
not necessarily always a choice.

Unlike Saudi Arabian students, many South Korean students reported that circumventing
particular aspects of their country’s education system was another reason propelling
mobility. In one of the focus groups Juno explains: “The entrance exam decides your life
course. If we do not get a good enough grade to go to a major college, then a second
option is explored and for people who can afford it, then go abroad to Japan, England,

60 For more on this see Rizvi (2009). His work is similar to references made by
China, the U.K or the U.S.” When asked why the United States was chosen as a destination, Seong Pyo states, “In Korea, people prefer the American or British systems, but the community college system in the U.S gives us the second chance to transfer to an American university. This is why I chose to come here.” The importance of the university entrance examination in South Korea is highly risky for many South Korean students and the experience of failing the exam or not achieving a certain score is nothing short of traumatizing as it is coupled with an intense amount of shame. Young Ik explains, “Before I came to the U.S, I had a lack of self-confidence because the name of my college was not that good. People saw me as someone who was not that good so I had no choice but to leave and try to come back”.

In Bourdieu's discussion (1988) on forms of capital, cultural capital or the intangible set of assets accrued is a social relation within a system of exchange that is perceived to confer power and status. This is the underlying and unspoken intention of migrating to the United States; education is merely the vehicle acting as a neoliberal condition of knowledge, status, and global cultural capital. Young Ik is highly cognizant of playing the seemingly irrational game. He elucidates:

“I graduated from Seoul University and it was not good. Anyway, people totally ignored people who went to an okay or decent college. I just came here to the U.S and people think differently and now say, “Young, you did a good job!” and I think “What the fuck? This is nothing! I did not do anything! I just got an opportunity from my parents who will pay and help.

61 This term was later translated in the interview as “inferiority complex”.
That is the only difference. Korean university students even study much more than people here who study\textsuperscript{62}!"

Young Ik, among many others, find their forced neoliberal subjectivity in which emphasizing personal ability and responsibility through brand capital (i.e name of school), is nothing short of a burden. This phenomenon has propelled student migration in South Korea more than any other factors, escalating and obscuring embedded structural inequalities of the country (Abelmann 2008).

The role of the culture and family in generating student migration is another point that should not be overlooked. International students need to be viewed through a broader lens of migration as the individual student is often not in the United States on their own volition much like many other experiences of migration. Some international students feel coerced in having to migrate to the United States for an education. Jae-hyun for instance, explained to me that he has been miserable ever since he came to the United States and had no intention of ever moving away from Seoul. “My parents first approached me about it saying that I should go study. It felt like I had no other choice for my future. Now, they refuse to let me come home without a degree. Not even for a visit.”

\textit{Familial Influences}

Student migration is typically perceived as an individual choice. This is one of the reasons why I chose to include focus groups in my methods. Allowing a space to uncover

the patterns embedded in the decision-making process of migration is at the heart of the lived experience and a group discussion is an ideal, quick medium for this. Countering the pervasive methodological individualism\textsuperscript{63} plaguing the literature is important in the context of migration. Raghuram (2012) makes reference to the individualistic biases in the literature stating that students are often severed from the real embedded context of family (and friends I would add) they are enmeshed in. The family (and friends) role needs to be understood in not only the decision-making process, but also in the perceived benefits of student migration. I found that the focus group was so useful for the students to chat and reflect back to a time before they had known one another. They enjoyed listening to one another’s stories as well. The underlying ethos is often overlooked and quite important (143).

A tension exists in independently applying a framework of individualization, which is that an individual is a socially embedded being in a collective that does not make choices or decisions independently of surroundings. Family and familial ties play a central role in student migration. In South Korea, this often takes the form of parents encouraging their children, especially men, to study in the United States and in Saudi Arabia, once a woman has secured her father’s permission, she is accommodated with a brother or her husband who receives an “escort” visa and both siblings are then looked up to by all the other members of the family. Ironically, the “escort” visa translates to U.S immigration

policy as the “dependent” on a family visa, which more accurately describes the brother-sister dyads I have worked with.

Embedded in tangled social webs, families play a large role in perpetuating and disallowing student migration. My friend Ala’a was shocked when her father approved of her leaving Riyadh for California. He told her that it was one of the better ways in which she would have a chance to find employment in the future. Her mother was hysterical for months constantly telling her, “You are too stupid Norah...you are ruining your chances for the future...just be good and sleep”. Ala’a mother conceives of her chances for social reproduction solely in terms of physical reproduction. However, the person that Ala’a was most concerned about was her oldest brother. “I was so afraid of him saying no, but he came to me and told me, “Ala’a, this is your life and I can stop in front of you. But if you want to study and become successful, if this is what you want, then go”. I was soooo happy. It is good for him to have this idea because I am not young!” Ala’a was very proud to tell me this part of her story as it displays the cosmopolitanism of her own family.

Family is at the heart of the decision-making process. The decision-making process represents a window into the intimate subjectivity that organizes and guides Norah’s experiences in the United States and family is at the heart of this. Her brother, Mashari, is one of many young Saudi men on an escort or dependency visa accompanying his sister 64. The migration “decision” is highly gendered to say the least and I have never seen gendered analysis applied in the literature yet, which is nothing short of negligent.
throughout her studies. When they arrived in California, she tested into a higher level language class than him\textsuperscript{65} and he tended to hover over her, often even coming into the classroom to tell her things on occasion. She would always take a deep breath to conceal her frustration while nodding to what he was telling her. They both are members of a very large, known to be strict family; Mashari once told me that if anything at all were to happen to Ala’a while abroad, his life would be over\textsuperscript{66}. After two years of language school, they moved to Oregon in order for her to attend an MBA program. After this time, Mashari has really settled into himself, making friends and being comfortable with his new life narrative that included allowing Ala’a independence, such as take the bus everywhere she went to meet friends for coffee and studying at the library into the early hours of the morning.

Under this migratory experience, their relationship completely changed, both reporting for the better. Mashari explains: “Ala’a and I were always close because we lived in the same house in Riyadh. But now, we are alone so we have gotten closer because now I am worrying about her. Where you came from? Where are you going? Haha! But I never asked her this back home or even how was school. Now we are alone. We have to talk. We have to fix problems together, doing anything here we have to talk now. Now when we go home, it will be the same. It is great.” Ala’a also commented on how her relationship with her brother completely changed for the better and that they rarely interacted when they lived together prior to the migration and now he does everything to

\textsuperscript{65} This is often the case with Saudi Arabian men and women, unless they are from a rural area in which the exact opposite is true.

\textsuperscript{66} No sarcasm was identified in this interaction.
make her life much easier such as calling on him to drive her where she wants to go. The
gendered power dynamic tends to soften among Saudi Arabian women and men in the
United States\textsuperscript{67} and this has little to do with the environment of the United States as
people unthinkingly assume, but rather about language ability. Saudi women are often
imbued with more power as their brothers and husbands have to initially rely on them to
negotiate with their landlords, order pizza, and set up utilities, for example.

South Korean students often create close knit circles of friends since they rarely migrate
with siblings and typically do not know anyone upon arrival. The male Korean students
even talked about who is considered in their in-group/out-group and this circle is closely
protected and monitored by the eldest. This constellation is similar to what occurs in all
diasporic populations\textsuperscript{68} although interestingly, the created families are often comprised of
individuals that would never interact if they were in South Korea. For instance, Dong
woo explains to me that Sean does not have enough money to survive on his own, but is
taken care of by the group because he is “the annoying little brother” and if they were in
South Korea, “it would be impossible for [our] paths to cross”. Part of the reason for this
is because they know they are all living under stressful conditions in which their
parents, to varying degrees, have forced them to study in the United States. Juno explains
in one of the focus groups: “Yeah, the same for me. It was not my opinion. I have no

\textsuperscript{67} It is important to note that Saudi Arabian men and women rarely interact with one
another in the United States. The first day of class at language school is typically the first
experience of a co-educational environment outside of family. However, Saudi Arabian
men and women interact with the opposite gender in the United States all the time, just
not with people from their own country.

\textsuperscript{68} See Nancy Abelmann’s work that is specific to South Koreans.
choice. My parents wanted me to study here after I finished high school because the first reason was I did not get enough score to go to high level school and the second reason and my parents really wanted me to experience as many things as possible. They told me that staying in the U.S will be good spec\textsuperscript{69} for me.” It was quickly uncovered that Juno’s experience was highly representative of his peers.

Neoliberal global capitalism has shifted the very meaning of youth and what constitutes childhood. No matter a child’s age, children, and this is especially true in South Korea, have become “projects” or the focus of input and parental effort, commodified and objectified through the lens of marketization and the reputation “it” carries. Education is seen as a direct path to acquiring all forms of capital and parents, particularly mothers, are highly invested in managing their children’s daily activities to work towards the end goal of success (Sorenson 1994). Almost 75% of South Korean students attend a haegwon or cram school\textsuperscript{70}, which is private education after school in order to prepare for the CSAT or college entrance exam that determines a teenager’s future prosperity. The enormous pressure to succeed has become known in recent years, particularly due to the high rates of suicide, the leading cause of death for South Korean youth\textsuperscript{71}. The Korean Health Promotion Foundation\textsuperscript{72} released a survey this year that shows more than half of all South Korean teenagers have experienced suicidal thoughts in the past year, with one

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{69} ‘Spec’ is Konglish (Korean English) and represents the term cultural capital as used in this research.
    \item \textsuperscript{70} http://www.bbc.com/news/education-25187993
    \item \textsuperscript{71} UNICEF: http://www.voicesofyouth.org/posts/student-suicides-in-south-korea
    \item \textsuperscript{72} An Affiliate of the Finance Ministry
\end{itemize}
out of three reporting suffering from depression. The primary causes reported were school pressure and future uncertainty\textsuperscript{73}.

The Korean male focus group all reported that they had undergone considerable stress that they were unable to enter prestigious universities because their scores were good, but not the best. Leaving South Korea was the reported strategy in offsetting risk, negotiating uncertainty, and circumventing testing culture. Gyu Bin explains that before going abroad, he had a lack of self-confidence or an inferiority complex\textsuperscript{74} because people knew the name of his college was not that good and this sense of shame required that he begin to buckle down and focus on the English language in order to obtain a degree from a U.S university. When I asked what other strategies were options, he replied, that there were none because finding solid employment was such a gamble.

This type of schooling pressure is much more prevalent in South Korea; however, Saudi Arabia is undergoing drastic change as the Kingdom [state] is gradually disinvesting from itself and expectations of caring for the elderly are slowly shifting to the responsibility of youth rather than state. Mohammed came to California to study the English language for two years and returned home after his visa expired with the plan of returning to the U.S for graduate school. He has been trying to get back to the United States to continue his education for approximately two years now, but his family is challenging him on the

\textsuperscript{73} http://blogs.wsj.com/korearealtime/2014/03/20/poll-shows-half-of-korean-teenagers-have-suicidal-thoughts/

\textsuperscript{74} This was the term that appeared in his digital dictionary we used when he became frustrated with his English vocabulary skills.
worth of returning and continuing his education. He explains, “Yes, my family, uh, especially my parents they do not want me to go out to study. I mean, they are afraid about the future. They want me to study, but they are afraid about what will happen in three or four years when I come back and have to look for a job again. I would be thirty two or three and you cannot find a job at this age. This would make it hard for me to find a wife and make money to take care of my family. They do not want to support me forever.” I was taken aback at the end of Mohammed’s sentence. While this is a very commonplace utterance in the cultural construction of families in the United States, this is the birth of a nascent dynamic in Saudi Arabia, one in which the conception of youth is shifting from that of a person to be cared for to that of an economic actor.\footnote{This is based on my own observations and to my knowledge has not been researched.}
Chapter 6: A Shift in paradigm, a shift in self

Reality always has this power to surprise. It surprises you with an answer that it gives to questions never asked - and which are most tempting. A great stimulus to life is there, in the capacity to divine possible unasked questions.
— Eduardo Galeano

Learning that takes root in a space of mobility requires a high degree of perseverance and courage; the courage to be in an unfamiliar and therefore, potentially unsafe environment, and still remain open to learning with perseverance to make learning sustain itself. As university administrations begin to grapple with the influx of global diversity in higher education, there has been a significant push towards the language of inclusivity to accommodate students, recognizing the importance of both social science and humanities research, particularly social justice, in moving towards a more inclusive model. This is highly important, as it is understood that in order for learning to occur, basic needs such as a safe environment needs to be satisfied first\(^{76}\). This becomes increasingly important in a context where international students are reporting that they are undergoing transformative changes in their educational migrations; all participants in the study report that education and learning are at the heart of this transformation.

This chapter focuses on the type of learning and education experienced abroad and extends the focus from the campus to the larger abroad experience. Students report, mainly positive, transformative learning in their lives, a type of learning that often shifts one’s paradigm, resulting in a shift in the self. This type of learning is hinged on challenging and building off of preexisting beliefs, thoughts, and values; therefore, it is not always comfortable, but reported to be positive in the long run. The experience of living abroad is also characterized by liminality or occupying a gray, liminal space in which one’s identity unravels a bit, which is accompanied by disorientation and the possibility of new perspectives. This type of learning is a hallmark of mobility and will be further explored in this chapter.

Reminiscent of countless writers, D.H Lawrence captured the importance of the inherent instability when one pushes or has their own limits pushed.

“When we get out of the glass bottle of our ego and when we escape like the squirrels in the cage of our personality and get into the forest again, we shall shiver with cold and fright. But things will happen to us so that we don’t know ourselves. Cool, unlying life will rush in.” (p. 287)

One of the most prominent examples of these types of transformations D.H Lawrence highlights is the shift in religious paradigm that often takes place with students from Southwest Asia. Saudi Arabian society, in particular, invests considerable time, energy, and effort into shaping and molding the one dominant discourse of Islam that rules the country known outside the Kingdom as Wahabbism.77 One of the central points of

77 Wahabbism is Saudi Arabia’s fundamentalist version of Islam that calls for a return to living life as it is in the Qur’an. A parallel, for explanatory purposes, can be drawn to
learning that Saudi Arabian students often report is a paradigmatic shift in perspectives and conceptions of Islam. Transitioning from the ultra-conservative orthodoxy of Wahabbism, into “my own version of Islam”, is one of the most commonly reported topics learned in the United States. For instance, when I asked Mohammed about the type of job he is seeking in the future, he spontaneously explains this paradigmatic shift.

L: So, what type of job are you hoping for?
M: A job that sends me abroad. Even if it is after 2 or 3 years to go again…
L: Why is going abroad so attractive?
M: Uh...because of a kind of learning I can never forget. It is now a part of me. There are so many things, Lauren, I cannot even tell you. It changed me. Studying abroad completely changed me. I only studied English in the U.S, but it gave me so many things. For example, accepting new people, new beliefs, a new religion. The U.S is the place I learned many things about Islam that I did not learn before. There is a saying that a religious man said before when he visited the U.S. in the 90s, “I saw the Islam, but I did not see the Muslims”. He saw the basic things about Islam in a new way…only in himself.

According to Jack Mezirow (1981), critical reflection has the potential to be transformative, to reveal the underlying cause which has resulted in specific value systems being held. His aim is to overcome the fatalistic and the blind following of those in a position of authority to seeing oneself as an agent of change. As Kitchenham (2008) argues, this view relies on Mezirow’s close reading of writers such as Jürgen Habermas where the emphasis is on the strengths of communicative forms of knowledge, rather than instrumentalist ones. Mezirow’s transformative learning theory focuses on identifying obstructions to reflection, habits of mind, fixed meaning perspectives and lists a whole

range of what he refers to as ‘taken-for-granted frames of reference’ (Mezirow 2003, p. 59). Mezirow outlines this in his definition of learning: “the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning schemes, habits of mind, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs, opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (Mezirow 2000:8). Transformative learning frees one from the uncritical acceptance of others purposes, values, and beliefs. These learning changes can occur dramatically or incrementally, eventually leading to a shift in meaning schemes or points of view that can then change a habit of mind or what Mezirow called meaning perspective. One central part of the development of meaning perspective is context as all beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions are heavily embedded in sociocultural history (Mezirow 1996, 2000). Changing one’s context, I argue, increases the likelihood of transformative learning taking place. In this light, Mohammed’s frame of reference unraveled and his meaning perspective shifted, resulting in transformative learning.

Communicating and revealing this type of transformative learning is perceived by many Saudi Arabian students as revealing a very deep, heartfelt secret that is often withheld from even the closest of friends and often experienced alone.

Mezirow suggests that it is through critical self-reflection that we become aware of why we attach the meanings we do to reality. It is through reflection, therefore, that we come to recognize biases, prejudices, learned values, and assumptions. The purpose is not only to change and challenge these meaning schemes, or habitus, but also to deal with the deep feelings and attachments we may have to the original belief system.
Learning is not always comfortable, especially transformative learning. Questioning one’s existing belief system is always somewhat uncomfortable. When one’s worldview is challenged, the reactions that people have to learning are highly variable. Some people move towards themselves as they become the object of their own curious inquiry. Others may experience alienation and actively resist transformation, especially if it calls into question one’s belief system. As educational migrants move through mobile spaces, transformative learning they frequently encounter what Mezirow called a “disorienting dilemma”. Mezirow (1991) defined disorienting dilemmas as “experiences, often emotionally charged situations, that fail to fit our expectations and consequently lack meaning for us, or we encounter an anomaly that cannot be given coherence either by learning within existing schemes or by learning new schemes” (94).

Although Mezirow and transformative learning researchers and educators report the disorienting dilemma in a positive light, exploring the potential negative consequences is important. Depending on a myriad of factors, a student may perceive this type of learning as a threat to the autobiographical self. An autobiographical self is the sense of personal history and continuity derived from a mental convergence of past, present and the perception of future experiences. Transformative learning has the potential to both add and subtract different narratives to one’s biography. If a learner perceives a new narrative as a threat, critical reflection could exacerbate negative feelings leading to disengagement and move back towards one’s comfort zone (Mälkki, 2010). Since the potential for
disengagement accompanies all learning, it is on the onus of educators to be highly aware of the potential negative consequences to transformative learning.

In a study of the intentional use of disorienting dilemma to promote transformative learning, Herbers and Mullins Nelson (2009) found the experience of a disorienting dilemma, though sufficient to provoke an effective response, by itself was insufficient to result in individual transformation. Post-dilemma momentum for transformation was a product of personal reflection, discussion, support from others, and related subsequent activities. Since an educational migration presents many new narratives and many students report undergoing profound changes, there is the possibility for perspective transformation that has been catalyzed by the experience of a disorienting dilemma (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1998). However, practically no empirical research has been conducted on the potential negative effects of transformative learning could have on individuals and social groups. If this type of learning is institutionally promoted as it is in study abroad programs, educators need to consider the potential negative impacts as well.

Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of habitus is a useful framework to highlight Mezirow’s meaning perspective as the shift in paradigm occurs through the experience of living in a transnational context. Habitus is taken here as “[...] a set of acquired characteristics which are a product of social conditioning [...] totally or partially common to people of similar social conditioning” (Bourdieu 2005: 45). This lens of embodied habitus encompasses the identity of an individual and equips persons with a set of tools with which to respond to particular surroundings and social situations. Thus, this is a well-suited lens into
exploring students’ transitions into, and experiences of higher education (Holdsworth 2006). However, the purpose of using the frame of habitus is to understand that it is socially constructed and thus access is not universal, but rather hierarchical in meaning for those that have the “wrong” type of cultural capital may find it difficult to adjust to situations whereby their “type” of cultural capital is not commonplace (Savage et al. 2005). Bourdieu elucidated the idea of a double bind or inculcated habits that do not necessarily match the changing field one occupies (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). International students, first generation college students, students of color, and other minorities have a heightened awareness as they often live this double bind as the context of U.S higher education that has been constructed as a white, American male space.78 Extending the lens of habitus here to encompass international students can be applied in theorizing the spatial geography and embodiment of U.S higher education.

Abdulrahman cognizantly acknowledges that the type of learning he has gone through is understood in an embodied form, one that others cannot necessarily see, but has been experienced by the individual as a paradigmatic shift in one’s sense of self. When asked, in the context of return migration questions, if there are any positives of being an international student, he explains:

A: Uh.....No. The positives are what I feel for myself, but others cannot see it. It’s in my body. Others they just think, okay you went there and you had fun there like a seven year vacation! -This is how people see it, like a vacation. This is one of the ways they are trying to make me stay here [Saudi Arabia] and not return. They

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78 For more on racialized students in a white, male context, see Nancy Abelmann (2009)’s work on Korean Americans that highlights the ethnic segregation of higher education threatens students ideas of personal growth and is in direct tension with the “liberal ideals” of U.S higher education.
think I had fun there [U.S] and that is it. But for me, personally, I believe that many things changed about me after living in the United States. Not easy things. No vacation! Like my whole self changed, you know. Seeing the world from a different view. You cannot see it if you stay in your country. I learned many things about my society and country. But most important, I learned a new Islam that I did not know it before.

This meaning-perspective Abdulrahman illuminates represents a significant shift in the context of education in Saudi Arabia. Generation by generation, the educational system in Saudi Arabia has expanded from its primary religious basis to incorporating practical learning to a point where the arts are now in greater demand in schools. However, religious teaching continues to dominate the majority of the school day for years (House 2012; Manami 2000) and this continues to be solely puritanical Wahhabi Islam. Although the fundamentalist interpretation of the Islamic religion continues to dominate, youth culture has begun to occupy the cracks in the foundation, creating small yet prevalent spaces for more diverse often liberal interpretations of the religion. A rather large space for learning a new version of Islam occurs while living in the United States where Islamic ideals are lived in another cultural context.

This perspective is shared among many Saudi Arabian students and the reported learning is highly embodied as knowledge is not separate from the site of its production, but rather experiential learning occurs in an experience (Merriam, Caffarella, Baumgartner 2007). However, the embodiment of a new version of Islam is rarely talked about or shared with one another for two prominent reasons: 1) consequences could emerge from rumors spreading as learning in and of itself represents an emblem of resistance and/or 2) since Islam is already a sacred, coveted, embodied part of one’s life, sharing a shift in this
paradigm requires a high level of trust to share this emotional experience. Nevertheless, all people reported undergoing this paradigmatic shift⁷⁹.

This paradigmatic shift in perspective in no way represents students becoming less religious. I have listened to many Americans talk about how Saudi Arabian are so lucky to be able to come to the United States in order to escape religion⁸⁰. This reductive thinking often occurs by many North Americans about Southwest Asians and it is entirely misinformed and reminiscent of Edward Said's Orientalist notions⁸¹. All students who reported a paradigmatic shift as they learned to embody a different form of Islam than the orthodox version of Wahhabism also reported that they have never felt more proud to be Muslims as their connection to Allah had been strengthened throughout the educational migration. Marwan elucidates by responding to my question of where he has learned about different versions of his religion:

M: From myself studying. I kept watching many YOUTUBE channels in English about Islam. It gave me also a new approach that people in Saudi Arabia do not know: to be friendly with other religions. The media here does not focus on this. Education here too. They are trying to make people see it more and more. Even in history, Prophet Mohammad’s neighbor was Jewish. I never learned that! The Jewish guy was sick and Mohammad stayed with him. This is the real history, but

⁷⁹ The emotional experience or embodied learning, here, may be interpreted as discursive performances embedded in ongoing power struggles (Abu-Lughod 1986; Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990).

⁸⁰ As I have learned about the complexities of Wahhabi Islam, the parallels to fundamentalist/evangelical Christians run very deep. I have come to see so many similarities between Saudi Arabia and the United States, especially in smaller towns in the south where religion defines daily life and often represents the sole social forum. In her book on Saudi Arabia, Karen Elliot House (2012) makes a reference to growing up in the panhandle of Texas being a similar environment to Saudi Arabia in terms of both climate and religious life.

people do not know this. They are trying to make better relations now with the others, but, uh, what do you call it, uh, mainstream religious people?
L: Wahhabi?
M: Yes, Haha...you know. They teach that they are enemies, but it is a totally not right. L: So you learned more about Islam, not Wahhabi Islam.
M: Yes. Wahhabi Islam is very strict and the real Islam, I know now is very flexible. Very, very flexible. So in the U.S, I learned many things about this and now.
L: So you learned all this in the U.S? M: Yes. I learned a new religion.

A quote from Khalid highlights how learning concepts in the context of the classroom that reflect a specific time in a person’s life can be relevant and resonate both in and out of the classroom for a student. I was caught off guard when he brought up a concept from a class of mine years prior. Omar, who he is referring to, is often known as the second caliph of Islam, a figure that is highly censored in Wahabbism and yet often looked up to by Saudi Arabian youth for his interactions with many people of diverse origins. Egypt ran a television during the holy month of Ramadan where a group of Saudi Arabian men watched a popular yet censored documentary, Omar, in an apartment in Santa Cruz, California.

L: What kind of changes are you talking about?
K: For example, Omar is a very great person in Islam. It is so interesting to move so far away to learn about home. I always remember what you said about this in the Anthropology class that you have to leave home to be able to see your home. Also, that many people can see things about you that you cannot see without work. This was a great time for us as international students to understand about this kind of thinking...many people don’t think about this because they are born and living and seeing things around them. They think they cannot make change - they will live and die - and never ask the question, “Why?”

The reflexivity Khalid exhibits is complementary to Mezirow’s concept of how reflexivity can act as a means to transform our understanding of the world we occupy and
our place in it. As the above quote suggests, this is not automatically a comfortable process and if a particular more powerful group frames reflexivity, then it is little more than reflexivity within an existing paradigm. The enemies of reflection are directives, tradition, and authority and for Mezirow the educative effort must be directed to encouraging us to think in ways that foster reflection and to promote the conditions under which reflection can take place. In this transformative learning framework, it is through this critical self-reflection that we become aware of why we attach the meanings we do to reality. It is through reflection that we come to recognize biases, prejudices, learned values, and assumptions. The purpose is not only to change and challenge these meaning schemes, or habitus, but also to deal with the deep feelings and attachments we may have to the original belief system.

Sarah, a former student, wrote another teacher and me a poem about her experience in our classrooms at an English language school. She was my student for a year before she headed to an interior design program at a university in California.

Hi,

I don't have something else except my words to express how much I miss you guys, I dedicate this poem to you my two teachers, it called The Revolutionary Language

Walking in the quiet hall

A revolutionary language in the wall Tickling our unconscious fall

Wait you have the ball

Still you can make your goal Some hold and some call
You touch my revolutionary soul Same place and same school

No one as you at all

Speak loud through the wall Someone will catch your call Laugh louder in the crowded hall You will wake an unconscious fall Be happy overall

You can say that you made a goal Learning

Warmly,

Sarah

Site of Learning

As the pinnacle of certain educational perspectives and theory, the power of this transformative, embodied learning shift needs to be harnessed by educators and university administrators to also occur in the context of the university and the classroom. Yet, the context of mobility is ripe for learning. The site of learning, in this research, was never reported to have occurred in the classroom. Much learning was being reported, but no references to schools, teachers, or libraries, or classrooms were brought up. After the first two interviews of this research, I began to ask questions about the location or space in which learning was taking place. Saudi Arabian students mostly reported that the original purpose of the scholarship program is not about sitting in the classroom, often saying that “the scholarship is not just about school”, but instead part of the larger agenda to change the country. South Korean students often reported that the type of learning happening is not possible in the classroom because it is “too hard to lecture for this kind of learning”82. When asked what type of learning was happening, most students reported

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82 This is indicative of the banking model of education that is commonplace globally, but particularly prominent in East Asia. Rote memorization is the main medium of learning
“the kind of learning that changes you” or “question everything you know thinking” or “the kind you can never forget”. Young Joo explains his interpretation in one of the focus groups why the crux of his learning occurs outside of the classroom:

You know, what I learned outside of class was - I do not know if it is only me - but even you get education here because of your race and background - it makes me small. I guess. hmmm.... I don’t know. When I am in Korea, I don’t think about that. But, can I say this? There is a strong hierarchy here with white people on top, and then everyone else, black people, latin americans, everyone. I became more conscious and careful of dealing with race. I learned a lot about this. I would not think about this in Korea. This is learning a lot….you know, you cannot speak English to everyone here. When I think about the janitors at UC Berkeley, for example. They speak Spanish to us and we learn about their lives here...America is difficult. I learned about my position become so small. Here I am just an Asian guy, you know. Haha. Most people think Chinese ‘cause they have no idea.

Young Joo told me about how he felt very naive when he initially moved to the East Bay as he was highly aware that he was entering a long-standing, historically constructed conversation of inequality that he did not know anything about. There were constant references of “feeling small” by many South Koreans as they underwent egoic reduction that often occurs when traveling or traversing unfamiliar environments. Learning that one is simply “Asian” is an educative experience for South Koreans that they are wish to explore and reflect on. In Young Joo’s case, this became a highly important learning experience for him due to his high class status and other privileges he embodies in South Korea. His awareness of his own identity was heightened in this double bind: his privileges simply do not translate to the environment of the East Bay. Learning and reflecting about one’s various positionalities and their places in the world, I argue, can as is objective testing. For more on the South Korean education system see Abelmann (2004, 2006). There is much resistance to this model with push back for more creativity and freethinking in schools. See Kim, K. H. (2005). Learning from each other: Creativity in East Asian and American education. Creativity Research Journal, 17(4), 337-347.
and should become an integral part of formal education that occurs in the classroom. There is no better time for this education than in the context of mobility. All South Koreans mentioned that they had learned a lot in the U.S from being in an unfamiliar, diverse environment and that the heart of this learning took place experientially and outside of the classroom. The reflections made during the interviews were spontaneous and unpolished as the interview was the first space in which the topic was verbalized.

One of the larger educative trends that South Korean students report is their exposure to so many different unique perspectives from which they draw inspiration. Almost all South Korean students report that they were initially inspired by one of their English

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83 When you teach international students for long enough and view the educational setting anthropologically, the patterns of learning begin to emerge. For instance, a curriculum that fostered a heightened awareness among Saudi Arabian and South Korean students in the same classroom had to do with a facilitated group discussion on the anthropology of marriage. Individually, the students brainstormed their ideas about the important characteristics their culture finds worthy in a suitable partner. Then, the students reported their answers as they were written on the white board. Students were surprised to see so many similarities and yet so many differences. Then, as a group, we brainstormed and added any characteristics that may represent typical American marriages that might have been missed. After the students felt satisfied with the characteristics that were representing their countries, they were then given five minutes to think about which were the top three characteristics on the board that were the most important to them personally. Next, the students were broken into cross-cultural groups to discuss and share the reasons behind their characteristics. Next, the whole class entered a conversation about how the characteristic may have changed over time, using marriage as a larger window into a culture. For instance, what does X say about Y country? Then, the students assignment to complete that evening was to write a journal–style entry reflecting on why they chose the characteristics they chose and their own identity in relation to their culture (much tension in the answers). Lastly, a short article was assigned on the anthropology of marriage. This is an example of a lesson plan I have created that often resulted in producing profound learning for students. Importantly, this is a lesson plan occurring in a English as a Foreign Language classroom. A breath of fresh air away from mainstream language books that tend to infantilize adults because of language skills.
language instructors whose outlook on the world was different and this typically hovered around varying concepts of “success”. For example, Sean explains, “I was so inspired by one instructor I had while I was at Kaplan. His family wanted him to be a doctor and study medicine - but he quit and followed what he was passionate about, like travel and culture things and adventure - so he quit the doctor stuff and opened a travel company and is teaching international students. This really helped him. We talked a lot at school. He really helped me.” This type of individualistic behavior resonated with many South Korean students who often feel as if they are under so much pressure to perform and become “successful” as defined by a highly competitive, cut-throat environment of Seoul. The opposite of success for youth today in Seoul is shame, with success being defined by the name of the university one attended, the name of the company one works for, and material wealth (Park, Abelmam & Kim 2009). The social pressure from both family and friends to conform to this standard of success is incredibly strong despite the fact that more than half of youth with a college diploma remain unemployed or have given up looking for jobs84 85.

All South Koreans reported that they underwent a perspective shift in terms of their philosophy of life. Seong Pyo reported that in order to obtain a good job in South Korea, it is necessary to simply follow corporate hiring trends. He explains:

84 http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-12/19/content_17184451.htm
85 This high proportion of well-educated youths is seen as the main reason for South Korea’s low rate of youth employment, which stands at 23 percent, ranking 29th among the 34 member states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The OECD average is 39.5 percent.
I am in the Korean society cage, following what other people are saying. They create the direction and I must follow how to get a good future. If I did not come here [U.S], I may think the same as the other people. I have to do this, I have to do that. I am 25 year, I have to do this and that. But now I am thinking more for me.

This discourse of “I” and “me” was peppered throughout the South Korean and Saudi Arabian interviews. Saudi Arabians discussed the emphasis on individualism in the United States with adjectives such as “fun”, “temporary” and “terrible”. For South Korean students, when people, like Seong Pyo behave more for themselves, they are often socially punished by their peers for “being a selfish American” and yet at the same time they romanticize notions of studying to be a veterinarian rather than an economist as their family mandates. Two brothers from South Korea did not speak to one another for over one month despite living in the same house. The older brother thought that the younger brother was being too selfish focusing on his studies and ignoring their group of Korean friends. The younger brother explained that in South Korea even if he were to have a large exam in the morning, he would not be able to put himself first and study if his friends were going out drinking. He explained that this was his favorite part of living in the United States: drinking when he wanted to drink, smoking when he wanted to smoke, and studying when he wanted to study. When I asked about the consequences that he faced from his peer group and elder brother, he explained that “although we created a kind of mini-Korea in this house, I can push off duties that I could not at home”. This type of tension and friction occurred frequently in both South Korean and Saudi Arabian peer groups. Similar to diasporic communities, tension and informal community policing
often arises when people begin to take on or embody characteristics of the place they inhabit.

The amount of tension, however, depends on the social hierarchy in which it functions. Young Ik, for instance, is the oldest male in a household of six South Korean male students. He was able to explore different avenues of both learning and behavior knowing full well that there would not be any issues until he returned home. He recreated a new definition of success and hoped to incorporate this learning into both his daily life and future. Initially, however, he came here to secure “a high position in society back home”. The following quote is highly generalizable to the South Koreans I interviewed. Young Ik explains:

When I was living in Korea, I was only thinking about success. Success means getting money and a high position in society. But I did not have an answer or a way to do this. I was using my father’s money and if I excluded my father’s money - I am nothing. I realized that I am nothing without this. It is terrible culture thing in Korea. People who cannot succeed are kind of shamed and looked at as lame. It is very competitive and in the U.S, I learned this is not healthy. I learned more about the humanism of life and that there are a lot of cultures here and I am not able to think in more diverse ways. I am thinking so small way. I now know that humans and people are more important than other things.

Young Ik’s quote represents an interesting contradiction in that international students typically are attempting to minimize their risk of failure in monetary terms and yet report a shift in definitions of what constitutes “success” wholly outside of market terms. This type of learning is unique to South Korea as the accepted definition of “success” among Saudi Arabian mainstream society is highly variable and measured on the scale of a family (i.e. how many children, origin of last name, etc.).
**Classroom Learning & English**

The ability to speak English has become a marker of privilege worldwide. It is often flaunted to signify access and exposure to the west and, at other times suppressed in hopes to not come across as elitist. In Saudi Arabia, the visibility of English took root in the current students’ parents’ generation, but only among very wealthy government officials (Manami 2000). However, for most, access to learning the English language to the level of proficiency remains a hurdle as it requires a private education in Saudi Arabia - a sign of a cosmopolitan lifestyle in and of itself. An added dimension to Saudi Arabsians who have a strong grasp on the English language is concomitant to their liberal upbringing. Not only have the parents invested in their children’s language acquisition, but they also have access to one of the greatest tools to circumvent censorship imaginable, providing a window to the outside world that is denied to the majority of the population. Those who stay or are forced to remain in Saudi Arabia for their education feel quite discriminated against as they observe the new cadre of youth studying abroad and this is often understood as an extension of western imperialism. There are certain restaurants, for instance, in Jeddah in which you can only order in English due to the attempted projection of a more cosmopolitan dining atmosphere. While many youth who have returned from abroad enjoy this, others scowl at the thought. Mobile and intelligent, Saudi Arabsians who are proficient in English are more esteemed while those who for social, economic, political, and religious reasons fail to master the language are looked down upon as involuntarily trapped in the past. Manami (2000) characterizes this as a quintessential window into the Kingdom’s tension between tradition and modernity.
One of the more difficult obstacles for Saudi Arabian students in the United States are reading and writing skills. In the Kingdom, Saudi Arabian English teachers often struggle with their own fluency; bringing in native English speakers to teach has just started and is still relegated to the very few students who can afford private schools. Although the educational system has undergone some tremendous changes in the Kingdom regarding the English language in the past several years, such as mandatory language classes starting in sixth grade, none of these changes have yet been applied towards the cadre of students currently studying abroad. For the Saudi Arabian students currently studying abroad, Arabic was the primary language spoken in all English classes in public schools and there was no emphasis particularly on reading and writing. English language classes in Saudi Arabia are taught at a very beginner, rudimentary level and the majority of students report learning more from online programs at home.\textsuperscript{86} The cultural emphasis on oral communication in Saudi Arabian culture is well documented\textsuperscript{87} and often perceived as the only literacy skill needed among youth today. Generally speaking, reading and writing are the most difficult obstacles for Saudi Arabian youth. One empirical study from King Saud University outlines some of the primary reasons for this are the unavailability of reading materials, lack of local libraries, beliefs of having better things to do than reading, and beliefs that there is no relationship between reading and other language skills (Al-Nafisah & Al-Shorman 2011). This is often a major concern for

\textsuperscript{86} For more information on English language and the obstacles faced by the Kingdom, see the full report: http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.4(1)/2013(4.1-11).pdf

\textsuperscript{87} See Karen Elliot House (2012) for an extensive list.
TESOL instructors and it is not uncommon to encounter students who are orally advanced with a beginning reading level throughout their education in the U.S.

Dissimilarly, South Koreans are formally taught English as a required language from the third year of elementary school; however, due to large class sizes, parenting philosophies, and other factors, many parents choose to send their children to haegwons or for-profit institutions also known as cram schools in East Asia. Haegwons are highly criticized for initiating the educational disparities that exist in South Korea with families that can afford the tuition more often score higher on the college entrance exams, leading to a higher standard of living (Seth 2002). English language classes are offered at haegwons as early as preschool. However, this is not to say that South Koreans do not struggle with the English language, especially in the context of living abroad. All English courses taught strive towards passing objective tests, such as the TOEIC examination that is required at most jobs. This has led to a higher fluency in both reading and writing, but rarely is there any practice with oral communication, resulting in a common struggle in communicating with their peers while abroad due to the nature of the curriculum and style of English language instruction. TESOL teachers around the country are best prepared when they have an understanding of the education systems from which countries students attended school. Catering to different cultural learning preferences can be tricky, especially balancing the different emphases on various skills in real time in a classroom.

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The different interactions people have with English language instruction based on their socioeconomic status, cultural emphases of language instruction, and individual abilities highly shape the international student experience. One of the primary and impacting cultural experiences for students is often when first exposure to North American teaching styles occurs at language schools. While the method of instruction is highly variable depending on the individual teacher - another point that international students are often surprised by - there are repetitive cultural patterns in a North American classroom such as the emphasis on providing one’s own opinion about a topic which one may have never previously thought about. For instance, it is not uncommon for a teacher to present an idea and then ask the students their opinion and reflections. When North American school systems are examined cross-culturally, they appear to be highly Socratic in that there is the tendency to create a classroom experience in which there is a shared dialogue between the teacher and the students that is pushed forward through questioning. The facilitator or teacher asks probing questions in an effort to uncover the belief that frames thoughts. Even when this is not the intention of the instructor, North American classrooms are historically informed by this method of instruction and from a South Korean perspective, North American classrooms highly Socratic in nature. This is often a source of tension and stress in which the student is severed from the collective body and asked to individually produce answers to opinion-based questions in which there is no “right” answer. Often the very first time this happens to South Korean students is in English language schools in which the very first day an oral examination is given in the

89 For more on the Socratic method, see http://web.stanford.edu/dept/CTL/Newsletter/socratic_method.pdf
form of an interview to determine which class level best suits the individual. Questions that elicit basic grammar principles are open-ended questions by nature. For instance, a typical interview question to elicit one of many conditionals in the English language looks like “If you had a million dollars, what would you do?” Open-ended questions like this are often a source of stress for international students who are much more familiar with lecture-based classrooms and questions in which there is one correct answer. Having to perform on the spot with opinions is something that is completely new for the majority of students. Ji-hoon explains his experience in university:

The American education system gives us more opportunities to speak up, but still I never speak at my school. I had two presentations at Berkeley, only two times in my whole time there. I am not saying I want more, but they should really try to involve everyone in the class, especially for Asians, not just Koreans you know, we don’t speak a lot, but we can read and write things...but we don’t speak...generally, students need to be given a space to speak. This does not exist for us now

Ji-hoon’s quote above can be read as either too general of an umbrella statement or indicative of a larger issue across a large group of people. In my experience, the latter is true. Accommodating international students in a classroom setting, at the very least, requires a brief but succinct understanding of the type of education system the student is familiar with and then strategies can be created to mix that incorporate this into the American classroom. Only then can a conversation begin about how to best accommodate international students on U.S campuses without the subjective result of numerous resources implemented that often continue to marginalize students.

*The Stranger Paradigm & Liminality*
Language is often an underestimated identity marker that should be incorporated into the understanding of intersectionalities or how oppressions are interrelated and thus, create a system of oppression that reflects the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination (Crenshaw 1989, Knudsen 2007). Although language ideology is important in evaluating a native Arabic or Korean speaker’s experience, more often than not students reported feeling marginalized by their English language ability, particularly in off-campus settings. In California, Saudi Arabian students often reported that once they spoke English to a native speaker, people would often respond in Spanish. Norah explains:

> When I speak, Lauren, you should see the reaction from Americans. When they realize I am not a native speaker, then I feel like I am treated differently. There is a lot of miscommunication with Americans. This makes me feel like I am not in my home, America is not my home. So, this makes me feel so bad about myself because no one wants to be stranger in home. I felt like a stranger. I can see their reaction, especially in coffee shops and any places really...when I pronounce a word three or four times, I would feel so bad about myself. Sometimes, also about, uh, they think I am Mexican. When I was in T-Mobile, someone came up to me and started to speak with me in Spanish. I told them that I did not speak Spanish. It was so funny because I laughed but really I feel bad. L: That is terrible...but native Spanish speakers never speak Spanish with you! N: No, of course not! Haha....

Norah explains the contradiction of what it feels like to be an educational migrant in the sense that she feels as if she is home yet struggles to maintain this position. Language, here, is the first identity marker that projects uncertainty about one’s positionality and place. Georg Simmel’s (1950: 402-408) concept of the stranger is relevant to international students in that the stranger is someone that is an active, participatory member of the group in which they live, while simultaneously remains distant from other “native” members of the group. This concept is highly applicable in the temporal space that a migrant occupies: the stranger, Simmel said, comes today and stays tomorrow.
Also, the social distance maintained between the stranger and the group has to do with the “origins” or where one originates, with the distance being emphasized not at all by physical distance, but rather by the closeness that occurs. The international student on campus is the experience of Simmel’s stranger because they participate in being in a group, but are not necessarily of the group they are a member of. In the quote above, Norah captures this precisely when she states, “no one wants to be a stranger in home”.

Similarly, another lens that captures the international student as an educational migrant is that of liminality and liminal spaces. Liminality is conceptual framework that has commonly been applied to rituals and religion in structuralism from Victor Turner’s work, inspired by Arnold Van Gennep; however, conceptually applying this to a postmodern lens of transnationalism and transborder migration can be valuable. The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae or also known as "threshold people” are necessarily ambiguous (Turner 1969). One's sense of identity dissolves to some extent, bringing about disorientation – but also the possibility of new perspectives. Turner posits that liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normative modes of social action, potentially as a period of scrutiny and skepticism for central values and axioms of a culture. In other words, typical limits to thought, self-understanding, and behavior have the potentially become undone. In this liminal space, the very structure of society has the potential to be temporarily suspended, which can be quite disorienting for the student yet ripe for education. Fahad young Saudi Arabian man who studied English for two years in Santa Cruz and is now living in New York studying towards his Master’s degree in Physics, explains:
In Santa Cruz, I think I am definitely a migrant. A lot of people knew me there. They know I am friendly. They know I am not a tourist and I live there and have an apartment. It was like being an immigrant. In New York right now with the family I live with, I already feel like I am at home. But when I leave the house, I am a stranger. It is too big and too new for me here right now. This is the gray part of being an international student. I think people see black and white because of the media. They do not know international students, especially from the bad media so even though I feel like this, I am not sure about how others here feel about me, but I have to be strong and don’t care. I am changing and this is not learning happening from my degree study.

Talal highlights the liminal space he occupies and has to assure himself constantly to not care what others think about him. A large part of this experience for Talal, however, has to do with his identity and perceptions of how people view Saudi Arabian Muslims in the United States - an unsavory position at best. Although there are rampant rumors and misinformation running amok within the Saudi Arabian international student community, the discrimination, prejudice, and blatant racism is very real and every Saudi Arabian student acquires a kind of thick skin in order to function in their daily lives.

Every Saudi Arabian that participated in this study, both women and men, reported their own internal contradictions about their experience in the U.S. On the one hand, everyone reported that Americans are friendly people who are kind. On the other hand, everyone has experienced varying levels of discrimination and feels as if this is the overall sentiment of the nation, but not of individuals. Abdullah, a Saudi Arabian man who is highly conscious and sensitive to this dynamic, explained to me, “I do not tell people where I am from. I always make them guess so I can read their reaction.” Many students find it frustrating, as they have all become involuntary representatives of their countries whether they asked for that role or not.
In social situations, students are persistently expected to defend their country’s actions, rationalize its every move and vindicate every statement of its politicians. Abdullah explains, “When people ask me about something they don’t like in my country, what do they think, I am the history, the government, or the King?” Abdullah often expressed his frustration with how both professors and other students addressed this in the classroom, too often reifying the entire region by asking questions like “How are things done in the Middle East?” or “How do we market this product to women in your country that can’t leave the house?” One student reported that in an international marketing seminar the entire class debated the ethics of marketing Saudi Arabian women’s clothing. There were two Saudi Arabian male students in the class who were mortified by both being in the spotlight and having to discuss their culture with people who had “large opinions and little understanding”. Professors in classes too often reify concepts of culture and force the role of cultural ambassador onto all international students, despite where they are from.

Few studies have systematically investigated the prejudice, discrimination, and racism that international students experience and the strategies they employ to negotiate the dynamics. The experience and the negotiation of the experience look different from the experience of marginality of people of color in that international students are entering long-standing, historical frameworks of inequality that are new knowledge to them and are first experienced as an adult. The literature on this is sparse, but a small number of studies point to a much more invidious side of international student experience. Students
from Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, China, and Taiwan in Matthews and Sidhu’s (2005) study all described themselves as ‘visible’ targets of racial abuse where they were more frequently picked on and ostracized in Australia. Collins (2006) conducted a meta-analysis on the media in Auckland uncovering East Asian students portrayed as a singular racial identity that is known by stereotypical economic, cultural, and social characteristics. This echoes the portrayal of students in the United States as well with the essentialization of differences between the dominant population and international students as the main epistemological framework in the discourse.

International students are increasingly characterized as a “risk”, but it is more often than not that the international student experiences risk, for instance from racial profiling. One easy public example is how quickly the country blamed the April 2013 Boston bombing on the one Saudi Arabian student present at the marathon. He was the only victim present of the one hundred and seventy six people who were injured to have his apartment raided90. After the investigation, he was immediately sent home with a “mental illness”. This is one of many instances when Saudi Arabian students have been racially profiled. The Federal Bureau Investigation (FBI) repeatedly would show up at my former student’s apartments asking them questions about their daily activities. Homeland Security would drive a van consistently through the school parking lot as well. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) would often hold students for hours of questioning and sometimes confiscate their personal belongings outside of the rules of law. Saudi Arabian students

are highly aware that they do not have the right to freedom of speech in the United States and curb not only any proselytizing of Islam, but also often any speech that refers to religion.

The case of Homaidan Ali Al-Turki is the most commonly cited when issues of discrimination based on the basis of both race and religion come up. A Saudi national, who was studying on a student visa in Colorado, was convicted right after September 11th, 2001 in a Colorado court for sexually assaulting his Indonesian housekeeper and keeping her as a virtual slave for four years in his home. He has a large following of Saudi Arabians across the world determining that the story was fabricated and none of the following events ever took place. Regardless about what truly happened, Homaidan Al-Turki is a household name among Saudi Arabian parents who cite that their children should never study in the United States or if they do, should never talk about Islam.

In a lengthy conversation, Norah explains the importance of his story to all Southwest Asian students as she struggles with her own representation of being Saudi Arabian in the U.S as well as representing the U.S to Saudi Arabia.

N: Maybe you heard about the innocent Saudi students in jail.
L: Yeah, but which one are you talking about?
N: After the NY attack, today they are supposed to...his name is Homaidan Ali Al-Turki and today, uh, how do I say it...anyway, he is in jail for 10 years in Colorado. It is a long story, I do not know if you search about him if you will find true information or not because the media about him is too bad, but yesterday, this was supposed to be the last day for us to know if he will go back to KSA or he will be here for the rest of his life.
L: So he was a student on the scholarship?
N: Yeah, he was studying his Ph.D. and uh, he was, uh...just a moment...this is the biggest story of all of them because it is from 10 years ago. If you search about
this trend on Twitter all the hashtags are about him. Yesterday was supposed to be
the day to find out whether he will be free or not, but then they said tomorrow. So,
today when I woke up I check right away and there was a message from his son
said, “Give us six days to give the decision”. They are taking so long.
L: So is this the story that your mom is thinking about?
N: Yeah, this is the biggest story. He is a good man. Lots of Saudi people like
him. Even though they do not know him, they care about him. Just a moment, I
want to check....yeah, rob, he robbed. What is the verb? Yeah. This story is a little
scary.
L: How does it make you feel being here?
N: The first thing that I learned from the story is to not talk about Islam. This is
life here. I do not want to talk about Islam. I do not want to get involved in
anything. The one thing they said about Homaidan is about the passport. In Saudi
Arabia, your passport is always with your employer. All workers is with the
managers. And, uh, when we were in the airport the first day we arrived here,
Meshari [brother] gave me my passport because he did not want to get in any
trouble! Everywhere and every time we go anywhere, he gives me my passport.
We have learned a lot of things from this, but I can’t take part of religion in public
here anywhere. It is not worth it. I mean if people ask me questions, of course, I
will answer them, but I do not talk about it myself. Of course you do not want
anyone to speak badly about your religion, but even when I hear this, if it is in
public, I just pretend I do not care about it. But, if anyone asks me and I know
they are interested, I will talk, but to dawah\(^{91}\), no. Never. Lauren, this is not just
me. This is all Saudi’s. They are scared about this everyday. Homaidan’s son
asked all Saudi’s and all Muslims if they could go to Colorado to support his
father, and I know there are a lot of Saudi students here now, 100,000 people, but
they will not go there because they are scared.

N: I do not know why though, because I do not see this in my daily life. I think
people here are so nice. I always tell my mother this when she mentions how bad
it is in America. I have been here 3 years and people are different from their
government. The people and government are separate. Almost everyone is so nice
and the normal people are not as what Saudi’s are thinking about them.
L: Of course. They are separate.
N: Even the government in the media are shown as good. They seem good.
haha....it is always showing them as good. What the media says about the U.S in
Saudi Arabia though is not true.
L: What do they say?
N: well, uh, they, haha...I don’t know...they show America in the way that my
mother thinks. She thinks they live in a fake world like a movie with no values or
respect.

\(^{91}\) Proselytizing
The story of Homadian Al-Turki represents political backdrop that represents the daily lives of not only Saudi Arabian students, but also all practicing Muslims in the U.S, especially those on a student visa, which increases their vulnerability. As evident from Norah's quote, the personal becomes fully understood as political for Saudi Arabian international students in the U.S. Stemming from inequality and Islamophobia, a new political subjectivity is foisted on all Southwest Asian international students.

The personal is forced to be understood as political in the context of mobility can be seen through a very happily unworried and unconcerned Saudi Arabian woman named Shereen. She explained to me that it is her job in both the United States and Saudi Arabia to "tell only good stories". She explained that in Saudi Arabia she tells people how kind and generous all American people are and when she is in the U.S, she only speaks about the amazing parts of her country and touts her religion. Engaging in this form of censorship requires a deep understanding of the historical schism that she is a part of. Saudi Arabian students are forced to undergo a deep transformation of the self in that the very fabric of their beings becomes political.

The context of mobility is ripe for learning. The experiences of both South Korean and Saudi Arabian students highlight that they undergo a shift in paradigm and this often results irreversible learning or a shift in self. Saudi Arabians are forced to undergo a more uncomfortable transition of change as American politics is projected onto their identities.

In turn, this creates friction and is often uncomfortable as students report engaging in

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92 As we saw through the experience of the Saudi Arabian student who was a victim of the Boston bombing, a student visa status is something that can be negotiated by authorities at any time.
censorship in order to not offend the political atmosphere they have developed a heightened awareness to.

As I mentioned above, the context of student mobility is an ideal space for learning that should be considered by university administrators and faculty. The intersections between habitus and transformative educational theory show how this shift in paradigm is a shift in self, a core feature of the educational migrant experience. There were various patterns that clustered around the larger theme of the power of reflection in education and when there is a shift in paradigm, there is a shift in self. However, the site of this transformative learning is not the classroom. Often times, transformative learning occurred in the more difficult space of liminality. Language barriers, discrimination, and racism shape the experiences of international students and their interactions with Americans. Entering this historical conversation without much of a foundation can be both disorienting and highly educative.
Chapter 7: Return Migration

"A sense of place is the sixth sense, an internal compass and map made by memory and spatial perception together." —Rebecca Solnit

“One cannot step in the same river twice” Heraclitus

Return migration is a phenomenon has often been overlooked in the academy and the return migration of international students is simply non-existent in the literature. However, return migration is often the most influential and impactful trajectory in shaping the experience of mobility. This chapter explores the educational migrants perceptions and experiences of return migration.

“Counter-currents” were first alluded to in 1885 and throughout the majority of the next century, transatlantic experiences have dominated research. For example, of the 16 million Europeans that had immigrated to the U.S., about one quarter of them returned home and even this was barely noticed by social scientists: out of the 2,051 titles in a 1980 meta-analysis, a mere 10 focused on return migration (Gmelch 1980). George Gmelch (1980) attributed this neglect to three primary reasons: 1) the analytical framework of migration focuses on mass urbanization, with a one-directional bias 2) the temporality of fieldwork has contributed to treating migration as a static event and 3) the mobility of people is difficult to quantify. Although the body of literature significantly grew in the 1980s, these biases are still prevalent.
An additional obsolete assumption that continues to influence the literature today seems to be the characterization of return migrants as originally emigrating from rural areas and small towns on their own volition in order to become more modern and survive. While economic necessity is real, there seems to be an erasure of a political economic approach in understanding the conditions under which migration occurs. High unemployment, decline in collectively owned land, fragmentations of families are treated in the literature as “natural” precursors prompting migration as a voluntary decision. However, in my research I have uncovered that in even the most elite of international students do not necessarily characterize their own educational migration as a “choice”. Although there is typically mention of being attracted to the host country, when prompted further the stress of maintaining their familial status in a neoliberal world characterized by risk, people tend to characterize their own migration experiences ranging from somewhat voluntary (usually referring to parental pressure) to “there is no other way”. It is important to get at the heart of this to demonstrate the extent to which people - including the wealthy - are being uprooted into a sphere of mobility in this era.

An additional reason contributing to the lack of literature on return migration is the United States government and additional funding agencies tend to be concerned about how many migrants/students are coming, how long they are staying, and when they will leave. However, there has been increasing awareness that “migration is not permanent nor total - that people do often return and may be involved in reiterative migration that leaves them grounded in more than one place” (Haines 2013:22). This lens - often referred to as transborder migration - is an exciting development that works towards a
more comprehensive theoretical framework to situate the international student experience.

To illustrate the iterative movement, at the time I interviewed Taeho he was closing his seven year chapter on his life in the U.S and in the process of moving to Beijing to study Chinese in order to increase his chances of then getting an internship in Singapore before moving back to Seoul where he planned to search for a job that would send him abroad. For him and many others, the purpose of his initial migratory movement was to advance his spec\textsuperscript{93}; in order to pursue the kind of cosmopolitan lifestyle that he was searching for, Taeho will have taken more than a decade\textsuperscript{94} investing in himself before applying for a job. When I asked him about returning to the U.S in the future, he replied that he will always return to the U.S, iteratively. He may even feel this way about Beijing. Reiterative migration, human mobilities and transborder migration are central frames in capturing the movement people are undergoing in order to understand strategies people take to reproduce the class conditions under which they were raised.

I have observed and learned that undergoing return migration is far from an easy transition of simply going home. I argue that return migration is best characterized by uncertainty and/or risk – depending on the circumstance. Beyond the acculturative stress, the expectations of family, friends, and the community have created a cut-throat environment in which the individual is, for the first time, treated like an individual. In

\textsuperscript{93} Spec is Konglish (Korean English) for the total sum package you display to a potential employer in order to get a job (CV, resume, certifications, etc.)

\textsuperscript{94} Post high school graduation
other words, graduating abroad signifies the end of the cultural construction of youth – and a person is expected to perform at a level – especially economically - that it is not obligated for those who have not left the home country. Fahad expressed that the end of his youth was his graduation from his M.B.A program in New York. "This is the end of my young life. I now am an adult and have to face the world. I have been a student for as long as I know and now this is ending. It is strange, really. This is all I know and now I am supposed to be prepared for the future. This is ridiculous. No one can prepare for this world. Not now." A confluence of familial, economic, and uncertainty creates high levels of pressure making undergoing an educational migration a risky decision that impacts the features and course of everyday life and future upon return. In the process of return migration, the once liminal space experienced abroad is transformed into a liminal condition. Yan Hairong (2008) covers this well when she explains the story of two migrant workers, Xiaohong and Hua Min, who become uprooted and then unable to fully root again. She explains how they are disallowed to “reterritorialize themselves as subjects of modernity, finding themselves within a painful, indeterminant space of neither belonging to the city nor being able to return - which, however, can also lead to new political possibilities” (223). I have observed this experience for many of the students whom I taught. Additionally, the data for this study is punctuated with the same theme from both South Korea and Saudi Arabia, although the idiosyncrasies are pronounced.

In Saudi Arabia, this process is sometimes referred to as “the dark days”. The dark days are precisely about the process of the liminal space that was once experienced abroad transforming into a more permanent liminal condition. In other words, the initial
migration tends to propel a student into a cycle of liminality. Although each individual
processes and negotiates their environment in unique ways, the liminal condition is often
accompanied with a period of waiting that often snowballs into a loss of hope. Students
that undergo return migration usually anticipate settling in and flourishing with their new
experiences; however, I have observed\textsuperscript{95} that after approximately three months, the
excitement of being surrounded by family and friends fades and a stage of ennui starts
and then deepens. Many people reported that the daily youth experience in Saudi Arabia
was characterized predominantly by boredom, but this extends to a larger picture of
unemployed youth all over the world. Daniel Mains (2012) explores this phenomenon in
his book by examining the struggles of young men to attain their aspirations for the future
in the context of limited economic opportunity. Mohammed explains this, with both
anger and sadness, as it continues to occur for him in Al-Madinah:

M: International students, well, they cannot get jobs right now so they do not have
a chance or opportunities. It is getting worse. You have to believe in them! You
send them to countries to study and then you have to trust them to run the country
when they come back - at least small parts - just try! They have to have a chance!
L: What is your prediction with all the international students coming home with
no jobs?
M: It is so horrible, Lauren. That is why I am waiting. I do not want to continue
my education for Masters now because I can’t leave. I do not want to be high
class educated unemployed guy. I would blame myself that I did not continue
working in the bank and I should not have continued to study. I would blame
myself about this. [Loud, heavy sigh] I have no answer for this. The situation is
not changing. There is no good prediction about the future. No one talks about it.
No one is talking about it. I should just stay home with my family. Nothing is
positive about the future.

\textsuperscript{95} This is an anecdotal observation, but could systematically be studied using
psychological methods.
Mohammed shows his frustration and feels lied to. He feels as if the government should be responsible in continuing to support students upon return. However, no such plan exists. This quote also aligns with Mains’ (2012) key findings about time, space, and capitalism. The anthropologist provides an ethnographic account of how young men experience unemployment as a problem of time in which young Ethiopian men joke about the only change in their lives is the sunrise and sunset. Similar points were punctuated throughout the interviews for this study. Boredom was spoken of as enveloping each day, making them all mold into one long stream of time. As explained above, the acquisition of cultural capital was the main impetus for propelling student mobility, and people consequently live in a certain construction of future-oriented time. In other words, there is an idea that upon return the neoliberal landscapes would be easier to navigate after studying abroad and in that sense, people are living for the future. This construction of time sets up high expectations and when one finds themselves sitting in the bedroom they grew up in watching imaginaries on YouTube, a disheartening feeling sets in that dances around losing hope. This is precisely how Saudi Arabian men describe their experiences and those who have attempted to circumvent this feeling sometimes return to the United States for a graduate program. Khalid, accompanying his sister on an escort visa while she worked towards her Master’s degree explains:

This summer when I went home to visit after Norah finished her school, well, ugh....the last 7 months I was there was really tough. I do not know. I do not know if I changed or the people changed. I do not know. I was sooooo bored. Nothing to do. I was wasting my time and my life waiting for my other sister to get accepted. Really really bored. Worse than ever. I was excited to come back. This was not a vacation. It was sooooo boring.
Residing from a highly privileged Riyadh family, Khalid’s father is allowing him to escort another sister to obtain her undergraduate degree in the United States\textsuperscript{96}. He explained how happy he was when his father approached him with this proposition after staying in his bedroom for half a year with "nothing to do". When I asked him why there is nothing to do, he did not have any answer. However, there are almost no leisure or recreational options in the Kingdom to absorb any youthful energy. Karen House (2012) explains, "An annual book fair sponsored by the Ministry of Information and Culture is about as close to public entertainment as the Kingdom gets" (103).

It is clear that there is a particularly type of youthful restlessness growing within the Kingdom because as Abdulaziz al Khayyal, the senior vice president of the national oil company Saudi ARAMCO puts it, "This generation does not need money, so talented young people also want to have fun; they want to be challenged and feel they contribute to something to their society, not just do what they are told. Today's young want more action" (House 2012:109). This is the general sentiment on youth today and return migrants represent central constituents of this shift. Alaa expresses how nervous she is to return, reinforcing Abdulaziz al Khayyal's statement:

\begin{quote}
When I went back to KSA, I feel like I don’t like to waste my time in front of TV, I want to do something, like help people, work, volunteer, do something for people, yeah. Read something. Continue learning I can’t stay in front of the TV and just talk. I am scared of this. I don't want this future
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{96} Since Khalid is on his sister’s scholarship, he receives money every month from the government without any expectation in return. His friends were often jealous of him as he could skip English class often without compromising his visa. As far as I know, Khalid is still taking English classes.
The reported boredom and hopelessness stems directly from the increasing difficulty of negotiating the transformation of cultural capital into economic capital in a neoliberal landscape. Although the economic landscapes in Saudi Arabia and South Korea vary, the returnees often find themselves struggling to find even a job interview, often staying home for years before finding employment, especially one they are satisfied with. There is a significant tension in the perceived accrual of cultural capital from the educational migration and the ability to transform this into economic capital. Saudi Arabian students, specifically, have returned home from the scholarship program and the majority of them remain unemployed. Individually, there are a lot of mental health consequences and collectively, there are a lot of political consequences as the government grapples with what to do with their youth who represent 70% of the country\textsuperscript{97} (House 2012:5).

In South Korea, working for a *chaebol* or multinational conglomerate is the goal for most Korean men, and increasingly women, who want to obtain decent salaries to be able to eventually start a family. Return migrants in South Korea have an advantage over their peers in that the objective testing that defines the Korean education is easily circumnavigated by graduating from a school in the United States. Four of the men who participated in this study were not able to attend reputable institutions in South Korea, for example, and now have degrees from UC Berkeley. However, South Korea is saturated with eager to work, educated young men and women. Before Myung-bak Lee left his presidency, he asked the South Korean people to stop going to college and return to

\textsuperscript{97} The current age demographics of Saudi Arabia are 70% of the population is under the age of thirty, with more than 60% age twenty or younger (House 2012: 5).
menial labor jobs. The country is now so saturated with bachelor degrees that the convenience store clerk positions have started to require college degrees. These conditions have propelled highly privileged students to seek degrees abroad, or work at unpaid internships in Singapore, in hopes of securing a middle class lifestyle upon return home. However, Woo-Cheol explains that although he has an advantage due to his English language skills, he anticipates his *spec* from abroad may only result in company spending more time looking at his resume than others. South Korean youth often complain about the cultural pressures they know they will face upon return. Economic success is highly interwoven with a larger narrative of success that includes finding a partner to marry and start a family. However, finding a job, reportedly, must occur before the age of thirty in South Korea or it becomes probable that one will be overlooked for being too old. The age culture pressure is a constant concern for South Koreans studying abroad, shaping the experience and the impetus to return. Most South Korean international students find the inflexibility of age culture incredibly frustrating after living in the United where the cultural constructions are more ambiguous, flexible, less defined. An excerpt from the South Korean male focus group explains:

YJ: A lot of Koreans want to go back home whenever they have vacation, like Won-Hyeok, all the kids in my school. I guess...I don’t know, but people who want to go back home every vacation are young. Early 20s. For us, we are old. Haha. So we get a lot of questions! Because we are old! Like what is the next step…
YI: People are so damn serious.
YJ: Like millions of questions...
Juno: Like when are you getting married...ugh.
YJ: Yeah, you know that is the main reason women do not want to go...how do I say, uh, the Korean holiday, you know during holidays, families gather together in one house. My father has eight siblings who gather in one house! Shoot me!
People who are 30 or over, just don’t even want to go there.
YI: Yeah, right.
Juno: Yeah, you get trapped.
YJ: You just get all the questions. It kills people!
Patric: Also, they think we are speaking English very well and it is pressure.
YJ: But you know people are bothering you about your future, your family, you just do not want to get involved...it is too much...

The stress of return migration for both South Koreans and Saudi Arabians is intricately tied to higher expectations set from family, friends as well as the larger community. South Koreans plan their lives in the U.S according to how old they envision they will be once their degrees are completed. For instance, I have seen people drop out of certain majors or move to the U.K which has a fast track one year MBA program in order to return before thirty years old. Concomitantly the cosmopolitan status of studying at an American institution and speaking English creates a return migration environment in which the stakes have been significantly raised. All international students feel as if they are highly judged upon return. Everyone reported feeling more scrutinized by their family, peers, and community than before. I had the chance to interview Jae-hyun the night of his graduation from a UC school. He was felt very proud of himself, but tried to conceal his pride to come across as humble. After all, investing in learning another language to the point of college fluency and then taking coursework with native English speakers is no small accomplishment. When I asked about his trip back to Korea the next morning he explained that he was so excited to see his family. His father had called earlier that day and told him that he was proud of his accomplishments. Jae-hyun was speechless because he had never heard a compliment from his father before. Shortly after expressing this initial excitement, he threw his hand against his forehead histrionically.

“The happiness I feel now will go away quickly. I have to focus on the next step.
Everyone will be waiting for me to get a job. They all want to see the job I get. I am not even there yet!"

In both Saudi Arabia and South Korea, return migrants are expected to find solid employment within a month or two of return. When this does not happen - as it often does not - a severe sense of inferiority and shame often sets in for South Koreans and shame, guilt, and anger for Saudi Arabians. The transformation of cultural capital into economic capital is simply not as easy as it is often perceived.

Cultural capital is place based and spatially mediated. Various social and spatial mechanisms underpin the conversion of cultural capital into economic capital. The cultural capital acquired is socially embedded, rooted in specific social relations, which are place based and not free-floating as the literature often suggests. Imagine a person in your life from your hometown that is doing really well for themselves. Now imagine that same person uprooted and placed in a different part of the country or world. Contrary to claims about human capital theory, the evaluation of credentials is a social and subjective process that is far from fixed and highly varied.

Migrants often become particularly aware of the relational and contextual nature of gender as they attempt to fulfill expectations of identity and behavior that may differ sharply in the several places they live. Migration literature often reports that women are less keen than men to return to their country of origin (Brettell 2000). My research suggests that this was true of South Korean women, but not Saudi Arabian women.
Many, but not all, South Korean women often expressed their interest in marrying outside of Korea\(^98\) as a way to not return. Jee Hye explains simply:

> Yeah, the system is made for them [men] so maybe that is why they want to go home and many of the women don’t. When I was really young child, like five or six, my father even knew that, he said “Jee Hye if you are not strong with knowledge and studying as strong as these Korean guys...[shakes her head], you have to challenge them and everything...”

Saudi Arabian women often criticize their society in the same light as Jee-Hye’s quote. Sarah, for example, explained that while abroad she had forgotten that her country was only about “money and men” and quickly remembered about one month after the initial excitement of return wore off. There were only two utterances in my sample of Saudi Arabian women expressing their desire to stay in the United States and both were spoken of as a distant dream not based in reality. Almost all Saudi Arabian women are ecstatic to go home. Due to the gender constellations and family structures, Saudi Arabian women report that their lives are much easier and less stressful in the Kingdom than in the U.S. Women are typically taken care of financially. While frustration is often expressed about the low expectations in the public sphere, the majority of Saudi Arabian women report with sorrow that American women have very difficult lives with a lot of responsibilities to balance and manage\(^99\). For women in Saudi Arabia, there is very little stress

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\(^{98}\) Although this ethnography is about Japan, the same phenomenon can be aptly applied to South Korea, see: Kelsky, K. (2001). *Women on the verge: Japanese women, Western dreams*. Duke University Press.

\(^{99}\) Saudi Arabian women are sometimes horrified with how little hands are available to help raise children in the United States and adapting to a system with little support that requires a lot of money is very difficult to explain. One woman in this sample, delivered her beautiful little girl while she was in language school in California. Now, as she works towards her Ph.D. in a STEM field, her daughter is learning English at daycare. She reports, “In your country, there is no other way, how sad. Life here makes me so tired.”
Concerning finances and there are many people in the household to help raise children. Family and children are the primary reason for return.

Cultural capital, I discovered, is highly gendered in the context of return migration. The women in my study fared better than the men. Overall, women are doing much better in transforming cultural capital to economic capital in both Saudi Arabia and South Korea\textsuperscript{100}. Although there are significantly fewer women who undergo educational migration\textsuperscript{101}, the majority of women report, with the completion of a degree, that they are employed and satisfied with their experiences. In Saudi Arabia, the private sector sees value in hiring women who have been abroad\textsuperscript{102} and are willing to work in a coed workplace with the skills acquired in the U.S. In South Korea, women consistently reported that they had gained confidence while abroad in their ability to speak up in the workplace and compete against their male counterparts with more confidence. While many South Korean women report satisfaction with their ability to find employment, rarely are women hired for high, coveted positions in \textit{chaebols} due to the cultural perception that after marriage, they will quit to raise a family (Monk-Turner & Turner 2004).

\textsuperscript{100} This was a surprising finding after reading about the 2008 financial crisis recovery being a predominantly masculine one globally.
\textsuperscript{101} The gender ratio for the King Abdullah scholarship program is 3:1, male: female.
\textsuperscript{102} Princess Ameerah, married to high profile Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal has inspired Saudi Arabian women and a space has slowly started to open up for women to work, particularly those who have been abroad. Very conservative men seem to be accepting of Saudi Arabian women return migrants because they hold the opinion that women’s dignity has already been compromised.
Saudi Arabian women are leaping towards new career aspirations and they are highly focused. I will be “the first Saudi Nobel prize winning chemist” or a ‘human rights lawyer” or an “entrepreneur to aid female run businesses” have now become quotidian goals and aspirations. Women work in primarily education and nursing in Saudi Arabia, but the youth have much greater expectations for individual fulfillment than their mothers (House 2012, Lippman 2012). This group of women on the scholarship program may be the first generation to realize these revolutionary visions. House aptly explains the frustration, “Wasting their talents, which could be used to develop society, frustrates most women far more than not being allowed to drive” (House 2012: 73). The amount of obstacles and hurdles already overcome in order to get themselves abroad already indicate a high level of negotiation skills and knowledge of how to bargain with patriarchy (Kandiyoti 1988). However, they are not necessarily representative of the entire country. Sanah explains:

It depends on the woman because they are split into two groups in KSA right now. One group says they have a good education and want to get married and stay home. Another group wants to work and prove themselves, but they cannot get married because they are only thinking about getting a job and making a new self to follow the dreams, and they think if marriage comes it is okay and if it doesn’t then they don’t care. Families are not happy with this kind of thinking because they know they are going to die in the future and the brothers will all be too busy to take care of her [their sister] with their new families.

Sanah, although married, is part of the second group of women who want to get a job/have a career. Her husband, Saud, has made her career aspirations his own. Saudi

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103 I use this quote purposefully to emphasize that the majority of Saudi Arabian women express larger concerns than the much alluded ban on female driving, although staging drive-ins have become a highly publicized form of resistance.

104 Many Saudi Arabian men are committed to their wives in this way. Although, I have never seen a man as committed as Saud is to Sanah. A structuralist anthropologist would
Arabian men and women report that women are benefitting tremendously from the scholarship program in terms of transforming cultural capital into job opportunities, reportedly better than men. Women remain much more optimistic about their ability to seek future employment. Norah explains that the scarcity of women with higher education degrees is now becoming more commonplace in Saudi Arabia.

You know what, I think that...uh, we have a gap between the women and men in education. I think women do not have much women with a higher education so it is easier for scholarship women to get a job. Even though in my country, men have a big chance to get a job, but men are everywhere in companies, and women are just in the education fields. But women are now educated more and more so these students are finding their way into the workplace. The scholarship, now, is helping women more than men.

Single women\textsuperscript{105} from both countries frequently discussed that upon return migration, the pressure to marry reopens. Two South Korean women, Ju and Sujin, reported a deep frustration with the patriarchal system in South Korea and both had hoped to marry outside of their nationality\textsuperscript{106}. One Saudi Arabian woman was giggling and excited at the idea of getting married when she returned. The rest of the women were not nearly as thrilled. Fatima explained that she would never make the same mistake of living for a man as her mother and aunts had made. Rowida said that she is tired of men being the center of women's lives when they should just be one part of a larger whole. Mohammed theorize that this has to do with their cross-cousin marriage. Saud's father, Sanah's uncle, is highly invested in her Ph.D. as well.

\textsuperscript{105} The majority of women in this study were single. One South Korean women got married in the middle of data collection and two Saudi Arabian women were married before moving to the U.S.

\textsuperscript{106} Ju married a Chinese American man and gave birth to a beautiful baby boy this past year. Sujin's U.S visa expired and in an effort to not return to South Korea she had migrated to New Zealand where she planned to marry her boyfriend in order to stay there. However, they had a falling out, resulting in a move back to Korea where she ended up marrying an older Korean man.
reflected on Saudi women who have had the opportunity to complete their degrees abroad as being proud markers of his country's progress, but concluded that it is a problem that these women now do not want to marry. Nonetheless, in both South Korea and Saudi Arabia, educational migration has been used as a strategy for both men and women, in order to create a space to delay marriage. Women report that focusing on being independent has benefitted their quality of life immensely and their aspirations are easier to realize than had they not migrated.

Women, especially single women, are often stigmatized after return migration. Although this is not the perspective of employers, both Saudi Arabian and South Korean women are perceived as having lost innocence or purity. Concepts of purity stem from a larger patriarchal, and in Saudi Arabia religious, metadiscourse used to demarcate the role of a “good woman”. Additionally, the United States is perceived as a dirty or sinful place where alcohol, drugs, and premarital sex are omnipresent. This taboo extends deep into Saudi Arabian and South Korean mother’s gossip networks and channels and has begun to affect marriage patterns. It is complicated though because women returnees have successful acquired cultural capital that raises their status, yet are scrutinized heavily when the topic of potential marriage partners arises. So-Yeon explains:

…if I say, I used to be an international student and even if the guy also studied out of the country, he really does not want to get married to me. I mean Korean men

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107 The exact same term [purity] is used in both Saudi Arabia and South Korea. Patriarchy is pandemic. A further investigation using Mary Douglas’ (1966) work would be interesting.

108 This topic warrants further research and examination.

109 This is predominantly about the fear of women engaging in premarital sex – in both countries.
do not want to marry Korean women who were international students because they really believe that my life is not, “pure” like I met many guys and dated and had sex. They want a “pure” woman so even though they had the experience of doing all these things, they do not want the women to. They only see one side. They don’t remember their own side.

Women who have studied abroad and undergone return migration express frustration, particularly because it is perceived as unjust and little can be done to mitigate the stigma except time. Many Saudi Arabian and South Korean women reported wearing particularly conservative clothing in order to try to manage the impressions of others. Small strategies and negotiations are enacted but it is time that seems to be the only solution to rebuild trust. Saudi Arabian are often accused of becoming “too open-minded”\textsuperscript{110}, while South Korean women are accused by men, particularly future prospective husbands of having had American boyfriends. South Korean and Saudi Arabian women share this frustration that stems from a larger cultural narrative that has naturalized an inequitable power dynamic; women are accused and often undergo a loss of social face regardless of their actual behavior. This contradiction represents a prime example of how women’s bodies embody the ideals of a nation without consent. Tamar Mayer (2000) states, “Nationalism frequently becomes the language through which sexual control and repression are justified and through which masculine prowess is expressed and strategically exercised.” (3) What actually happens abroad is simply unknown and the smallest change in a woman’s personality or style can easily be dismissed negatively as western, despite the fact that this is precisely what men are lauded for.

\textsuperscript{110} This claim of someone being “too open-minded” is nebulous in Saudi Arabia, but it comes up a lot. A woman is too open minded is she accepts behaviors of other Muslims that are outside of the proscribed religious narratives and is tolerant in her comments.
Rowida analogized her experience to being in a shark tank waiting for something to bite. She explained how she had to calculate all of her behavior for months in order to not be blamed for being "western" or, from the point of view of more conservative male elders, for acting like an "infidel". Alaa explained that her initial return experience was full of harsh judgment about her English ability, particularly because her sister-in-law continued to badger her about it in front of the family. She explains:

Everyone kept asking me about my English. I did not feel like I had that strong language to show off or something. It was embarrassing. Everyone, one of my - Hussain’s brother’s wife - what do you call it? - Her major was English. She was coming to me and saying words in English, and it was pretty annoying for me because I did not want to say anything in English at the time. If I were to have made a single mistake in English, they would all say “she did not learn anything in the U.S.” Even though I studied English in the U.S., I had a big background in KSA (in English), but since I came here they did not treat me the same.

Initially, this can be mitigated with a calculated or managed performance of self. For instance, Alaa explained that there was much gossip in her extended family about whether or not she would start to wear colorful, patterned hijabs or not. She purposefully wore the dullest clothes she owned for weeks in order to mitigate any perceived judgment. The high-stakes environment for return migrants does not stop at language skills or clothes.

Cultural capital is highly dependent on both space and place, and the context of return migration is a space in which this is highly pronounced. Women are less scrutinized for any behaviors mislabeled western in cosmopolitan areas of Seoul or Jeddah. The value ascribed to educational migration depends on whether or not one is in an environment
where others have also undergone the same process. A saturated environment such as the more affluent districts in Seoul and Riyadh significantly reduces the importance of a degree from a top institution in the U.S, English fluency, and an elevated cosmopolitan status. However, the students returning to Al Baha, a small village in the south of Saudi Arabia, are able to harness their cultural capital and use it to their advantage. Particularly women because it is relatively novel for them to travel from this region, let alone return with a Ph.D. This is precisely the trajectory that Sarah is on and the university is holding a professorship for her return, which will make her the first Saudi Arabian female Chemistry professor. Returning to a large city such as cosmopolitan Jeddah represents a much different narrative than the village of Al-Baha.

Chapter five highlighted the importance of cultural capital in propelling and initiating student mobility, but the nature of cultural capital is highly variant. Pritchard (2011) found that international students returning to Taiwan and Sri Lanka from the United Kingdom experienced less trauma upon reentry when their educational goals were met. However, cultural capital can be an elusive and abstract concept to discuss and when this is the main finding in propelling the student movement, it is hard to say that the acquisition or embodiment of it facilitates a smoother reentry experience. Consistent with Pritchard's findings though is that returning students have a much smoother reentry process when their employment trajectories are clear. This can be easily seen through the Saudi ARAMCO students as well as the South Korean government officials that receive
salaries to obtain M.B.A degrees\textsuperscript{111}. However, a small number of students possess such a direct path of employment.

When Fahad and I reconnected on SKYPE for this study, it had been a year and a half since I had seen his face. He looked ashen and older as if much more time had passed than actually had. Before I could even ask any questions pertaining to the interview, he unwound about his fruitless employment search:

L: Are you thinking about this everyday or is there some time to relax too?
F: Sometimes I sleep 9 or 10 hours to dream about anything and stop thinking about this. When I am alone, I am thinking too much. I have many white hairs now. You did not see this [turns around to show me a large bald spot that is totally new]. I think this is from thinking about the future, about the next thing. You know I have only seen my friends here two times. I do not want to see people. I do not want to tell them about my situation. I want to make a good way and then I can see them. I need a solution before I see friends. I have only seen them two times in almost two years.
L: Have you seen Abood, Mero, or Dahoom?
F: Yes! Dahoom and Abood have come to Madinah and I have seen them maybe 4 times. I went to Riyadh to see them and they came here to see me. They understand because they are the same.

Although Fahad had been accepted to the University of Wisconsin, Madison and would love to continue his graduate studies, he is too scared to continue his education abroad for fear that it will just prolong his inability to obtain decent employment. He thinks things are getting much worse with the economy and ability to maintain a decent lifestyle. He has every right to be concerned. The Kingdom [state] has made severe cutbacks and is undergoing a wave of privatization (Guazzone & Pioppi 2009) that resides in the hands of

\textsuperscript{111} It should be noted that this is strictly observational and anecdotal from working with ARAMCO and SAMSUNG students in the past. None of them were a part of the research study.
a few families (House 2012). Karen House (2012) summarizes the urgent situation in the Kingdom: "Not only is unemployment among young Saudis fully 40 percent, but 40 percent of all Saudi citizens live on less than 3,000 Saudi riyals ($850) a month" (House 2012: 159). The wealth that the Kingdom often touts is merely a mirage or a reflection of the royal family's lifestyle. Fahad is highly aware of the neoliberal policies that have been eroding the middle class; he explains that without the alms mandated by Islam, people would be hungry. However, this awareness frustrates him and pushes him into a more isolated, alienated state because he is unable to have conversations with others about how is unemployment is related to the larger trends of what is happening in the Kingdom and world. Instead he takes on his experience as internalized blame.

Not being able to share his experiences, in general, is a common thread among returnees. David Haines (2013) noted this in his study of Americans who went overseas for education or military service, and then returned as college students. He concludes that returnees reported that they had no outlet for the topics and issues they wished to discuss and this also contributed to feelings of alienation and estrangement. In my observations, these feelings in concordance with depression, represent a mental health crisis. This is a topic rarely explored and warrants further investigation. The once liminal space experienced as a stranger abroad too often results in a liminal condition or liminal subjectivity in the country of origin. It is difficult to experience this in a place called

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112 These are precisely the conditions that led to the Arab Spring in 2011.
home. Aguilar\textsuperscript{113} (1999) explored return migration using the lens of Victor Turner's rite of passage (1967) and used his theory of liminality. He theorized that Filipino international migrants underwent a rite of passage in which the migrant is a liminal subject that is not only separated from the community, but also suspended from his or her pre-ritual habits of thought. In other words, after undergoing the transformative educational migration discussed in Chapter six, the migrant reenters his or her community as a post-ritual subject with the ritual being the experience of migration and liminality. Aguilar (1999) expanded this post-ritual subject to include a new personhood and an elevated cosmopolitan status, which is applicable to international students.

Despite the pervasive liminality, both South Koreans and Saudi Arabians report that their experiences abroad have deeply transformed their personhood and elevated their social status. While conducting interviews it seemed as though this represented a contradiction. On the one hand, I listened to the difficulties and hardships. On the other hand, in the same conversation people declared incredibly positive things and if given the chance, they would do it all over again. I have come to understand that nostalgia works bidirectionally. The interviews conducted in the United States reveal a yearning to return home, and when interviewed after return migration people want to discuss stories that occurred abroad. The return migration interviews lead me to believe that as long as one is moving towards something or has a sense they are going somewhere in life, they are

\textsuperscript{113} This study is the only one I know of that has extended the use of Turner's (1966) work to examine migratory movements.
okay. Often the trauma of migration [and liminality] sets in when one realizes that here too one has ended up being stuck in a now unfamiliar rather than familiar environment.

In his work with Lebanese migrants, Hage (2002, 2005) connects the themes of viability of life and a sense of what he termed existential mobility or "the sense one is going somewhere in life" (470). He argues that the social and historical conditions of permanent crisis\textsuperscript{114} of neoliberal globalization have led to an exacerbation of feeling stuck. He termed this "stuckedness". When people feel as if they are stuck or going nowhere, they begin to contemplate the necessity of physical mobility of going somewhere (Hage 2005). "More often than not, what is referred to as 'voluntary' migration then is either the inability or an unwillingness to endure and "wait out" a crisis of existential mobility" (Hage 2005: 471). Indeed a hallmark of this era is mobility and the future is the orienting principle. International students seem as if they are at the forefront of an experience that extends far beyond the student movement as they are on a path to attempt to satiate their experiences of existential mobility\textsuperscript{115}.

\textsuperscript{114} Permanent crisis in his work is concomitant to Ulrich Beck's risk society.

\textsuperscript{115} It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the concept of existential mobility further, but it is worth mentioning that I have the suspicion that Hage's work can be applied outside of the lens of migration and applied as a larger grand theory of this era. At the very least, this conceptual framework applied to almost all of my friends.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

It is my hope that this study will contribute to a new lens in which to view and come to understand international students as educational migrants. A systematic qualitative approach\textsuperscript{116} was purposefully designed in order to create a space for the lived experience of an international student to emerge and remain at the heart of the perspective. In an attempt to systematically limit the scope of the research, I chose to focus on South Korean and Saudi Arabian students while capturing two of the top five sending countries. I was initially nervous about this. It would have made more sense to research and write about Chinese students to be in line with the future projections of student mobilities. Throughout the research process, particularly data collection, I constantly reflected on the patterns in which the South Korean international student experiences are highly representative of East Asian students and Saudi Arabian students of Southwest Asian students. Also, I found it interesting to reflect on the similarities in which people from one culture undergo a similar migratory pattern and come out with an entirely different experience. The context of mobility is often one of insecurity and introspection, growth and liminality. Ethnographically, the individual must remain the focal point and researchers have a responsibility to write against the homogenizing discourse in which international students are seen as a distinct population. This research strove to systematically identify the overlaps in order to begin to conceptualize the international

\textsuperscript{116} This is precisely the angle missing in the literature that is made up of predominantly quantitative research designs that continue to produce narrow results. Without qualitative research, it is impossible for a quantitative research designs to identify the appropriate variables with which to begin. When more qualitative research is conducted, the variables of interest are allowed to diversify and become more nuanced. This can strengthen all research designs and produce more quality, rigorous research.
student experience in a light where more inclusive policies may be approached for American higher education.

This project started out with a simple yet complicated question to answer: Who are international students? I set out to discover the perceptions of mobility, ranging from the lived experience of migration to what value a U.S education holds and accomplishes for students. This angle revealed the major conditions and influences both propelling educational migration and the course, features, and impacts of reentry migration. What prompts students to engage in this risky transformative activity? What is the experience of an American campus? Is the reentry process facilitated by the educational objectives and cultural capital acquired in the U.S? The reasons propelling mobility are highly varied, but centered around all people wanting to invest in themselves. It is an educational investment, but not necessarily in the formal sense. Cultural capital remains the most important impetus in prompting educational migration as well as the flexible strategies employed in transitioning in return migration. Not credentials. Not an academic degree. Not language skills. These things are all highly important. The initial movement is purported to be a conceived of as a much larger investment in the self than homo economicus\textsuperscript{117} would suggest. Becoming more aware about the world and expanding one’s thinking continue to be cosmopolitan features driving student mobility.

\textsuperscript{117}This is a reference to Raj Patel's book The Value of Nothing (2011). Homo economicus, ironically, refers to the neoliberal vision of a human as global capitalism dictates. Since only market terms exist, homo economicus is a "person" who does what they can to obtain the greatest number of luxuries with the smallest amount of labor. This neoclassical assumption is precisely what shapes existing research on international students. This is why the literature can be dominated by quantitative analyses.
While in the United States, there are many tests and requirements in order to get to a four year university and graduate. However, there are alternative pathways that have opened up that range from community colleges to private corporate businesses. International students from Saudi Arabia and South Korea have become constitutive of American higher education campuses and yet they continue to have a peripheral educational experience. For example, they spend a lot of time observing their peers, but rarely interacting with them. Yet, all international student report they long for friendships with their American peers. Like all migrants, educational migrants live in a space of liminality. This strengthens the friendships with other international students as they often have to stick together to strategize how to survive in courses and navigate the bureaucracy of a large, diasporic community.

At least partially from occupying this liminal space and reflecting, all students reported undergoing a shift in their worldview that transformed the core of their being. Although sometimes this was uncomfortable, the learning that occurs is profound, transformative. Undergoing a shift in worldview often results from a shift in self, one that often stings and yet all students report satisfaction with their new selves. Since this context for mobility is so ripe for learning, it is important for educators to be aware of the type of transformative learning occurring and start to develop discussions and curriculum to mirror this in the classroom.
However, the transformations one undergoes while abroad does not ease the often difficult process of reentry migration where the liminal space occupied abroad becomes more than a space, but rather a condition or way of being. Navigating the social scrutiny and uneven economic landscapes prove to be difficult for international students. This liminal condition, then, sometimes results in a sense of nostalgia for the recent past or one’s life abroad. Signifying the end of youth, returning home is not an easy process. Discussing the psychological process of reentry migration should be happening on campuses prior to the experience. I envision this occurring in the form of a discussion based support group, one that touches on the transformative learning and the research that has been done that discussing the difficulties of return. This could lead to a space on campus in which the international students as educational migrant experience can begin in the classroom.

One of the most significant contributions of this research was to bring the topic of student mobilities into anthropological research. Research on higher education in general represents a gap in the discipline of anthropology, even in the subfield of educational anthropology. No anthropological work has been conducted on international students in the United States. Approaching international students as educational migrants brings the lens of transnationalism, transborder migration, and neoliberal globalization into the frame of capturing and interpreting the lived experience. Anthropological tools, methods, and techniques are suited to contribute to this research gap. Including student mobilities into an anthropological approach allows for a new perspective in which to approach
international students from an administrative point of view within the university as well as to inform policy at the national level.

The Comaroffs’ remind us that theorizing is a compulsory process – not a privileged optional one, but rather a courageous act that is “…indispensable to any effort at making the history of the future different from the history of the present” (2012:48). This research presents new ways to theorize the type of mobility students are engaged in and how they make sense of their educational migrations. Also, student mobility can be viewed as a window into theorizing the larger forces of global capitalism. Educational migrations are most likely going to be a much larger force in the future. The precarious conditions shaping the uneven and increasingly difficult economic landscapes are pushing specific groups of individuals out of their countries in order to invest in themselves in hopes of mitigating, minimizing, and offsetting future risks. Adding new epistemological frames creates the potential for new and improved perspectives to generate policy.

Exploring and reflecting on both friendship as methodology and multi-sited ethnography were two additional dimensions this project contributed to anthropological research. The methodological technique of friendship as methodology is a fieldwork technique that is commonplace and experienced by many anthropologists, but rarely spoken of in an era where claims of objectivity are applauded and positivistic projects receive funding. I have found that research deepens relationships, serves the participants in reflecting on their own lives, and lays the groundwork and potential for rich data. Friendship as
methodology is also an ideal technique to employ in ethnographic studies of mobility. As people are engaged in mobility, the friendship becomes the means of research as migration research presents the added difficulties of keeping in touch with people as they move across space. Little work has been done of late in contributing to and critically examining the multi-sited debate. Spontaneously questioning the viability of multi-sited ethnography became the site of critical reflection. Place continues to remain an important concept despite the time and space compression associated with global capitalism. The lack of literature on the topic of student mobilities and migration also created an exploratory rather than explanatory model of research. Despite the systematic coding and grounded theory that uncovered findings, the theoretical frameworks employed represent a very nascent attempt of conceptualizing and situating international students in a migratory lens of transborder migration. This represents a strength of this research as the existing literature is scant and yet the number of international students is already burgeoning and continuing to grow. In other words, this is a timely contribution.

Future research is needed to see how student mobilities are carving out pathways of inequality at home. For instance, what is the value of an education from Seoul National University with many students returning with degrees from UC Berkeley? Is South Korean education undermined by the presence of U.S institutions? Does the ability to afford international student tuition at a UC school, for example, create a new avenue of social stratification that did not exist otherwise? At what age can it be predicted that a student will study abroad? How is the burgeoning industry of International Education
built on the differentiation of national education systems? How does this transform the meaning of education?

The too often forgotten dimension of return migration needs to be further examined. In following people through the process of return migration, much more depth was uncovered than I had previously anticipated. The return home signified an end of youth for all participants. Graduation was an event that was met with much relief, happiness, and fear. This fear proved to be well-grounded in that the liminal space negotiated abroad often extended into a liminal condition or liminal subjectivity upon return. To use Daniel Mains (2012) term the youth’s “hope has been cut” with unemployment and paralyzing uncertainty. Although studying abroad is seemingly innocuous, once the migration starts, so does liminality and risk. Despite reporting undergoing intense scrutiny for studying abroad, women are faring better than men in the realm of return migration. Much more research on the intersections of gender and educational migration is needed. In the context of student mobility, this is an important avenue to explore because it has never been done.

Another generative avenue of research would be to analyze how the Saudi Arabian scholarship program is changing the very fabric of the country, particularly from a gendered angle. More often than not, Saudi Arabian men change drastically their perceptions of women in their educational migrations, simply because they tend to spend
a lot of time with women often for the first time in their lives\textsuperscript{118}. Some shut down from this, but most people begin to open up to a whole new world that is no longer an imaginary, but one grounded in reality. Piecemeal literature, mostly in the form of news articles, exists about the influence return migrants have had as a force for change. In addition, all Saudi Arabian international students express that codes of gender are changing. This would be a fascinating avenue to explore how the culture mediates this shift in performance.

One such topic that resulted from this study is the need for more in-depth spatial analysis that focuses on gender and documents the local mobility of international students throughout their higher education experience. South Korean and Saudi Arabian female international students are quite limited in their mobility both on and off campus with most students reporting that they travel between the classroom, the grocery store, and the home. This is not representative of the male international student experience. South Korean women often find it necessary to find a male partner from their country in order to get around in a car, for example\textsuperscript{119}. Men possess greater local mobility in the United States and I have the suspicion that the effects of this are quite impactful. This avenue of research could have policy suggestions that would facilitate women's mobility and increase access to resources on campus.

\textsuperscript{118} Saudi Arabian men and women are forced to interact in the United States in classroom settings, particularly language schools. However, they tend to avoid one another with Saudi Arabian women spending time with only women and Saudi Arabian men spending time with any woman who is not Saudi.

\textsuperscript{119} Rarely do South Korean parents buy their daughters a vehicle in the U.S.
Cultural competency trainings that are specific to working with individual cultures - not all international students - have the potential to highly benefit both the students and the faculty. There is no shortage of resources in higher education dedicated to trying to accommodate international students. Although they are catered to, they still remain marginalized. Administrative centers are expanding all over the American higher education landscape in an effort to redirect and facilitate conversations about global diversity and inclusivity. However, these efforts are often separate from the day to day experiences with faculty in the classroom. Faculty often report feeling frustrated with international students. Student conduct offices across the nation are filled with plagiarism offenses from international students at a rate that is nowhere near the percentage of the population enrolled. A lot of this stems from a deep chasm of misunderstanding and misinformation.

Additionally, the site of learning uncovered in my research was reported to occur largely outside of the classroom. While any learning should be celebrated, there is significant potential to harness this transformative learning inside the classroom as well. This can be done with an instructor who has a background working with international students and curriculum that facilitates reflective conversation, active listening, and reflexive writing. Domestic students would benefit from participating in this as well. Educators know how tough it is to create spaces for transformative learning to occur and yet this is happening everywhere. One way to start this would be to create workshops or a one credit course where an instructor with experience could facilitate discussion, creating a space where international students would be able to explore their experiences of migration together.
Issues and obstacles would be systematically explored, all grounded in research. For instance, a return migration seminar would highly benefit educational migrants prior to return. Simply exploring these issues together could enhance the quality of transformative learning as well as the experience of American higher education.


Banks, J.A (2000). Who’s Afraid of Bilingual Learners? The Role of Teachers’ Attitudes and Beliefs. Educational researcher 37 (3) 129-139.


Appendix A: Profiles of Participants

Jee-hye – A woman in her late twenties who has an extremely contagious laugh and an angelic face. She is considered a rebel in South Korea for smoking cigarettes purposefully in public places where there is still an official ban on women smoking in public. After studying English in the U.S for four years, her father insisted that she return home to marry and she actively refused. Refused until he stopped sending her money because he had found a man for her to marry. For a couple of days, she flirted with the idea of getting a job in a Korean or Japanese restaurant and then decided that she needed to return. She was able to bargain with patriarchy upon return migration, talking her way out of the marriage to that particular individual, reporting great victory. She is currently living in Seoul working for a desirable employer.

Min-ah – A young woman in her early twenties particularly skilled at translating her sarcastic, humorous comments into English is such a fun person to be around. Constantly busting others chops, Min-ah performs her gender more on the masculine side of the stereotypical spectrum. One week she was constantly nagging me about her essay. I had not gotten to them yet so I was short with her protecting my boundaries as an instructor. The next day she continued to nag me about it. That evening, she came out to me through her writing. The next day when I saw her I gave her a big smile and a huge hug. She asked me if I had known. I smiled. She punched my arm. Min-ah is an extremely playful character and highly interested in health and nutrition. She is currently working as a nutrition educator at a school and does some consulting on the side.

Sujin – In her early thirties, Sujin is a courageous woman who came to the United States seeking a different way of being in the world. Linguistically, Sujin is nothing short of brilliant, and emotionally, she is a tough woman as she has been through a lot. Her parents divorced when she was young and although the actual divorce was not particularly stressful, the cultural stigma of being the child of divorced parents has affected her ability to marry due to the cultural perception of her inevitable divorce. She has done much work to internalize little of this. She stayed in the United States about
year and a half past her visa living on both coasts. After her deportation, she moved to New Zealand for a couple of years before marrying a Korean man in Seoul. Her sarcastic humor is hilarious.

**Ju Young** – A woman in her early thirties who worked for Samsung for five years and quickly became disillusioned “living the Korean dream”. She saved all her money and said that her life was a whirlwind for a year as she bought a one-way plane ticket to San Francisco with little planning. Five years later, she is a Californian homeowner and recently, her Chinese-American husband and her welcomed a little boy into the world. She has plans to return to Korea as an old woman as it is important for her to be buried there. Ju Young is a light-hearted, wonderful person to be around. She strives to master the English language as it is the only barrier preventing her from feeling completely comfortable in the United States.

**Young ah** – A woman in her mid-forties known as “Umma” or “Mom” informally, came to the United States with her daughter in order for her to study English. Young-ah has a good position in the Seoul municipal government and took a three year sabbatical, which was extended into five years citing health reasons. She simply works too hard. This sabbatical allowed her to invest in her daughters language skills as well as receive her M.B.A degree to keep her visa active. She rarely had time to spend with her daughter in South Korea because both her and her husband work too much and moving to the United States allowed her to become the mother she had always wanted to be. Suji is a very bright girl and English now sounds as if it is her native language. Young-ah cites that simply moving to the United States for five years will have saved their family money and stress in the long run. According to Chosun Ilbo, South Korean parents spent an average of $1,000 per child on education each month ([http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2012/1110/Drive-for-education-drives-South-Korean-families-into-the-red](http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2012/1110/Drive-for-education-drives-South-Korean-families-into-the-red))

**Seon-ju** – A woman in her early twenties who is highly intelligent, sensitive, and often behaves in extremes. An artistic character, Seon-ju is either fancily dressed or in
sweatpants, nothing in between. She either walks around animated with her head held high or sulking with a hoodie. Every day is a different day for Seon-ju. She is a talented pianist, violinist, and has been a member of many choirs. She also is highly interested in photography and takes phenomenal photos. She is currently working at a non-profit in Seoul that helps low-income people dress fashionable.

Norah – A hardworking woman in her mid-twenties just finished her M.B.A degree. Struggling with grammar has been a source of frustration for Norah throughout the five years she spent in the United States. She enjoyed her independence while living here, taking the bus all over town with her friends. Her mother has been devastated everyday she has been gone, but she has the full support of her father. She hopes to start her own microfinance business aiding women entrepreneurs.

Fatima – A woman in her late twenties from a small village who has an insatiable passion for physical chemistry. She came to the United States to master the English language in order to pursue her doctoral degree and her master’s thesis advisor has practically begged her to stay. She birthed her beautiful daughter on a cold night in a hospital in California and could not fathom why I kept nagging about bringing a car seat until the hospital would not let her and her husband leave. Fatima is a very pious woman who knows that one of the core strengths of being a woman is piety as it represents a key in both bargaining and arguing with men.

Sanah – A woman in her late twenties who was raised in a very liberal family. Hanin is always loosely veiled and wears bright, hot-pink lipstick any chance she gets. One of these chances was at her co-ed baby shower when she basked in attention slowly opening each gift. She has perfected a balanced performance of a pious, cosmopolitan woman. Her English speaking skills are incredible and she often laughs and talks at the same time. She loves to travel, particularly to Jordan and Lebanon where she believes the food to be the best in the world.
Sarah – A woman in her early thirties and mother of two, Sarah jumped at the chance to further her education when her husband’s company showed interest in sending him to the United States. Sarah has a gentle, passionate soul with a big imagination. She reads a lot of English literature classics and yearns to experience love in a way that she has never felt before. She has had to tuck her acceptance letter to a school in Michigan away in order to return to Riyadh, where she had felt stuck for a couple of years. Recently, she has entered a law program in her city focusing on discrimination law and women. Sarah is also a humble poet.

Rowida – A woman in her mid-twenties, Rowida dreams about her future traditionally arranged marriage. Unlike her sister who has known the man she will marry since childhood, Rowida is adamant about her parents heavy involvement in choosing “the perfect man”. Rowida is interested in medical equipment and technology. She is finishing up her degree in the United States and returning home. She is determined to be a mother who works out of the house in Saudi Arabia and this is no small feat. Rowida enjoys matching her shoes with her purses and gossiping.

Ala’a – A woman in her early twenties who is always highly aware of her surroundings. She is reserved not quiet, reticent not shy. Ala’a comes across as unapproachable with her hands wrapped tightly across her body and takes a while to warm up, often with a delayed social smile. She is incredibly loyal to those she lets in to her world. Her favorite thing is to host all female dinner parties and dress to kill. She enjoys cooking and always shakes her head at the Imperial system of measurement citing it as the main reason she does expand her recipe base.

Abdulrahman – A man in his mid-twenties who hails from a large Riyadh family is on his second round of studying in the United States. After finishing his undergraduate degree in California, he returned home to start his own company. After some initial success, ennui set in and he began applying to M.B.A programs in the United States. He
complains about the weather in Wisconsin, but has settled in meeting new friends. Abdulrahman is absolutely hysterical. Everywhere he travels he brings his “girlfriend” with him, the name for his hookah. He instigates fun in every possible moment and situation in a very light-hearted, genuine manner.

**Mohammed** – A man in the last year of his twenties is one of the most aware Saudi Arabian men I have met. His superb English skills propelled his knowledge base by leaps and bounds. A very political person, Mohammed began to both read and listen to the news in English every morning, exercising his critical thinking skills and formulating educated opinions. Mohammed is a delight to be around. He is quiet, observant, sarcastic, and funny. He is able to carry on highly intellectual conversations and also act immature with his friends. His favorite thing about the United States is that people often carrying books around with them, for instance to read on the bus. The return migration process was so stressful for him that he lost the majority of his hair.

**Talal** – A man in his late twenties, Talal lives in the present. His privilege allows him to not worry much about the future as he foresees little uncertainty. He laughs at most things, is light-hearted, and has a warm smile. Obtaining his Master’s degree in Physics is extremely important to him as he has aspirations to teach at his undergraduate institution. His experience studying English in California humbled him. He diligently called his family about two hours (6:00 am) before school in the parking lot outside and would always update me about his sister’s health or tell me new gossip as if I knew the people he was speaking about.

**Fahad** – A loyal man in his late twenties, Fahad attracts many different kinds of people to him but his closest friends are considered his family. He gets along with everyone and often takes the role of lead negotiator when tension is in the air. He mumbles when he is tired and uses his hands a lot when he speaks. Fahad is a generous person who often picks up the tab at restaurants and would never let someone he respects pay for a cup of their
own coffee. He used to be very afraid of dogs before living in the United States often questioning why Americans are nicer to dogs than people.

**Mashari** – A bright man in his late twenties, Moayad has an insatiable, adventurous soul. He questions the veracity of all people and things around him. His skepticism is a mix of highly intelligent critical thinking skills that sometimes border on paranoia. Once in his inner circle, a very coveted and difficult place to enter, he refers to people as “habibi” or “my love” and is loyal almost to a fault. He is nothing short of a world traveler at this point. Prior to studying in the United States he spent all of his time outside of Saudi Arabia in Egypt, a place very near to his heart. However, he has traversed and experienced more of the United States than most Americans. He loves the United States dearly and has so much anger at the leftist politics of Islamophobia.

**Hussam** – A tender-hearted, slow man in his early thirties, Abdullah is a dreamer. He is a shape-shifter. When with his cousin, he discusses the criteria for his future wife. When he is with his best friend, he discusses his hidden relationship with a Japanese nurse. Abdullah is interested in learning, although his hunger for new information can come across like reading a English as a second language Wikipedia page or a stream of unrelated facts. He was so surprised by the culture of Las Vegas that when he returned he had little words to explain his experience. Abdullah is a caring brother to a younger brother who is now studying English in California, following in his footsteps.

**Young Joo** – A determined man in his late twenties who spent seven years in the United States, graduating, to his surprise, with a degree from UC Berkeley. Young Joo has an incredibly strong work ethic, but also knows when to take a break and relax with friends. He plans to work in the import/export industry, with the ultimate goal of starting his own company to do business with North Korea, a market he says that will boom in the next decade. He enjoys photography and animals. One of his lifelong passions is to spend more time learning and taking pictures of animals. Young Joo gracefully experiences and
navigates the difficulties and family drama of an upper-class family in Seoul and manages to stay upbeat and light-hearted even when stressed.

**Young Ik** – A generous man in his early thirties who recently got married and welcomed an adorable baby boy into the world. Young Ik carries the weight of the world on his shoulders. He embroils himself at the center of the drama and then comes up gasping for air. His has a knack for social interaction and is highly reflective. In a different life, he would like to have been a psychology or philosophy professor.

**Won-Hyeok** – A young man in his early twenties who became the younger brother of the group of Korean men. He has the least money and the least social knowledge, resulting in often being the brunt of jokes, but at the same time highly protected and taken care of by the group. He has not had to pay for food since he has come to the U.S, for example. Won-Hyeok is particularly good at mathematics and was horrified at the mathematical ability of an average American freshman when he began tutoring at his community college. He is currently a student in California.

**Juno** – A young man in his early twenties who has great anxiety about his compulsory military service. With stress lines in his forehead and a heavy heart, Juno knows that the service is inevitable before he turns thirty in order to maintain his citizenship in South Korea. He spends a lot of time thinking about this part of his future. Until then, he is a bookworm who genuinely enjoys school and learning, although his favorite books are Japanese manga. He is a very respectful young man and is diligent about his church attendance in the United States, trying to get other Koreans to attend with him with little sway due to his young age.

**Evan** – A young man in his twenties had his U.S college education disrupted by South Korea’s mandatory military service, something he had been postponing for a couple of years. Although it will be difficult linguistically, Evan hopes to return to finish the last two years of his undergraduate degree. Evan is a sweet, innocent guy. He is tall, lanky,
and unassuming. His friends continue to be mad at him for spending too much time with his girlfriend. They claim that he is interested in her money, but I highly doubt this about Evan and think they are finding faults in him because they are upset at his constant absence.

Seong Pyo (Sean) – A man in his late twenties, Seong Pyo is an older brother figure and acts like it. He spent one year in the United States for high school and then returned for university. Seong Pyo is a traditionalist. He picks fights with those that disrupt any Korean cultural patterns that tend to loosen while abroad. For example, when someone needs to study for an exam on the same day that it is someone else’s birthday, that person is expected to drop their exam and go out drinking all night for a friend’s birthday. Otherwise, the person is selfish. Seong Pyo is currently at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida.