Socio-Economic Well-Being of International F-1 Students Living and Working in the United States

Elena K. Taborda

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF INTERNATIONAL F-1 STUDENTS LIVING AND WORKING IN THE UNITED STATES

A Dissertation Presented

by

ELENA K. TABORDA

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
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May 2020

Global Inclusion and Social Development Program
SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF INTERNATIONAL F-1 STUDENTS LIVING AND WORKING IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF INTERNATIONAL F-1 STUDENTS LIVING AND WORKING IN THE UNITED STATES

May 2020

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According to United States law, international F-1 students are nonimmigrant aliens residing in the United States temporarily. Yet, they are more than just short-term visitors, as many of them live in the country for years while pursuing their postsecondary studies. Since international students are foreign citizens, their rights and freedoms are bound by the constraints of the country’s immigration policies. This study is concerned with work-related restrictions imposed on F-1 students by the U.S. government, positioning international students’ limited opportunities for employment as being in violation with their basic human right to economic and social development.
This multi-method project drew upon human rights and capabilities frameworks and combined policy analysis with primary data to investigate the lived experiences of international students with respect to employment and opportunity. Based on a case study anchored in the New England region, it incorporated in-depth interviews and surveys with current and former international F-1 students (N=38) who were engaged in the workforce while pursuing their studies and residing in the United States. In addition, multi-site data collection included interviews with 22 stakeholders, such as international student advisors and members of international student advocacy organizations, whose contributions presented student experiences from a completely different angle.

Founded in the transdisciplinary research process, this investigation took into account theoretical frameworks from the fields of higher education, labor studies, immigration policy and human rights. A case study method was chosen due to its effectiveness in the application towards policy evaluation where no reliable measures of its impact and adequacy currently exist. Data collection focused on international students’ socio-economic well-being as well as their coping strategies in the face of employment-related immigration policies. The findings reveal that highly restrictive immigration policies had a negative impact on the livelihoods of international F-1 students, fostered exclusion and exploitation, forced students to engage in unauthorized labor, and created continuous financial struggles. Recommendations call for policy change and for the utilization of a more holistic approach in researching international students’ issues.
DEDICATION

This is to you, mom. Fearless yet gentle, you are my true role model who I continue to look up to every day. Thank you for your endless love and support.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my committee members, each of whom has provided patient advice and guidance throughout the research process. Thank you all for your unwavering support.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The right to work and free choice of employment is a basic human right (§ 23.1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR], United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 1948), yet for millions of human beings around the world, the capacity to enjoy this right remains a remote prospect (United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [CESCR], UN, 2006, para. 4).

Amongst these people are international F-1 students pursuing their studies in the United States. Defined as nonimmigrants by the U.S. Code [USC], in Title 8 – Aliens and Nationality – [8] USC sec.1101(a)(15)(F)(i), international F-1 students are foreign citizens residing in the United States temporarily (USC, 2020a). Therefore, their rights and freedoms are bound by the constraints of the country’s highly restrictive immigration policies. As a result, and in accordance with Title 8 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations [8 CFR] part 214.2(f)(9), international students on an F-1 visa are not allowed to freely and fully participate in the workforce and may generally, with a few exceptions, only work on campus for a limited number of hours (CFR, 2020a). The law strictly prohibits F-1 students from engaging in off-campus employment that is not directly related to their academic program. And even then, should students find a job in their field of study, it is still at the discretion of the school and government officials to authorize their participation.
An established legal framework within a society is what ultimately defines the socio-economic well-being of individuals who either directly benefit from the regulations within it or, on the contrary, become its immediate victims. International students in the United States do not quite fit into any of the already established categories within the law and end up finding themselves some place in-between. International students’ socio-legal status is rather ambiguous to begin with: “They are part of the system but are denied by the system” (Haines & Rosenblum, 1999, p.361). They are technically residents, because a lot of them spend many years in the country while pursuing their degrees, but they are aliens at the same time and are expected to leave as soon as they complete their program.

I contend in this study that current work-related immigration policies are inadequate because in reality, international F-1 students are more than just regular short-term visitors. Admitted for ‘duration of status’, many of these students live in the United States for years while pursuing their studies (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2018). Yet, strict immigration regulations deny their access to full and meaningful participation in society, which can negatively impact the quality of their livelihoods.

**Terminology**

Since there are several nonimmigrant student categories that constitute the Student and Exchange Visitor Program [SEVP], one of eight programs managed by the National Security Investigations Division of the Homeland Security Investigations bureau of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency [ICE] of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS] (ICE, 2019a), this study utilizes the term international students only in relation to those non-U.S.-born students pursuing higher education in the United States and who fall under the F-1 nonimmigrant status in accordance with 8 CFR 214.2(f).
Statement of the Problem

Since F-1 students are bound by numerous work-related restrictions and conditions imposed on them by the U.S. government, they become excluded from all the benefits that come with the right to work and free choice of employment, placing them at a disadvantage with domestic students, who do not have such restrictions. Meanwhile, 70% of students in the United States ‘earn while they learn’ (Carnevale, Smith, Melton, & Price, 2015), indicating that employment has become an integral part of a college experience. Students talk to each other about their jobs, they create friendships at work, they gain valuable experiences through employment, develop professional skills, the list goes on.

International students, just like their U.S.-born peers, also have the need to create their own networks of friends, colleagues and allies, ideally – without being told whom exactly to affiliate with by law. When international students are denied an opportunity to grow and develop through workplace participation, in any capacity and without any specific restrictions, they experience exclusion. This lawful exclusion even further deepens their socio-economic insecurity and reinforces marginalization (Marginson, 2012). The right to work is critical for a life of dignity (International Network for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights, 2019), it enhances social solidarity and promotes development (Udombana, 2006). Social exclusion is a violation of human dignity (Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, UN, 1993) and is an infringement of one’s right to development (Declaration on the Right to Development, UNGA, 1986). International F-1 students deserve to be treated equally in line with the rest of the members of the human family regardless of their socially constructed nonimmigrant status.
This exploratory study investigates lived experiences of current and former international F-1 students who were employed while in F-1 status and who were presently residing in the United States. In addition, the study engages external stakeholders, such as international student advisors, in the conversation about international F-1 students’ socio-economic security. The study, therefore, addresses the following research questions:

1) How do employment-related immigration policies affect socio-economic well-being of international F-1 students living and working in the United States?

2) What do international F-1 students’ coping strategies look like in the face of such policies?

Context of the Problem

U.S. regulations on international student mobility are still highly politicized as the country’s immigration policies continue to be closely connected to national security (Sa & Sabzalieva, 2018) and aim to protect American workers and wages (USCIS, 2012). Selective denial of rights to certain ‘others’ has long been used as a tool for nation-building and reinforcement of civic unity (Marx, 2002), and in the United States, restrictiveness of immigration policies has been continuously justified by economic and political circumstances (Massey, 1999; Meyers 2004; Timmer & Williams, 1998). However, numerous scholars have found that restrictive immigration policies not only discourage economic growth (American Immigration Council, 2012; Chang, 2016; Clemens, 2011; Goldin, 2018; Hernandez, 2018; Moses & Letnes, 2004; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017), but also contribute to a climate of fear and anxiety (Duncan, 2017; Irvine, 2012) while increasing vulnerability to exploitation and irregularity (Soova, 2015; Zetter & Ruaudel,
Therefore, the U.S. government’s economic rationalization of these restrictive policies does not seem to be indisputably valid.

Many young adults around the globe want to experience what it is like to study and work abroad (Urban & Berlein Palmer, 2016), and the rise of international student mobility may be explained through a variety of theoretical frameworks tied to the notion of rapid globalization (Shield, 2013). My main concern, however, is with the barriers to this natural development. In the case of international students in the United States in particular, I argue that it is the disconnect between their real needs and restrictive immigration policies that ultimately interferes with everyone’s potential to build a more inclusive community.

Instead of “encouraging mobility of the highly skilled” (International Organization for Migration, 2012, p.80), the U.S. government is continuously intensifying the enforcement of immigration regulations for these admittedly “useful others” (Kretsedemas, 2011, p.e3). Indeed, international students are not viewed as undesirable aliens; on the contrary, the United States seeks continuity and growth of the international student flow as these students contribute billions of dollars to the U.S. economy. According to NAFSA: Association of International Educators [NAFSA], international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed $41 billion to the U.S. economy during the 2018/2019 academic year (NAFSA, 2019).

Nevertheless, the U.S. government wants to make sure that this lucrative nonimmigrant flow does not make claims on employment in the context of an inelastic domestic labor market, so it intensifies the enforcement of immigration regulations (Kretsedemas, 2011). In other words, employment-related immigration policies for international students are designed to control the U.S. labor market by, presumably,
protecting it from the foreigners, an argument that also conveniently aligns with the nativist sentiments within national borders (Walsh, 2008). The fact that one of the 9/11 highjackers was on an F-1 student visa (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 2004), even further exacerbates these negative attitudes.

International students are being continuously monitored by the DHS under the SEVP, which is now one of eight programs established within its National Security Investigations Division that focus on identifying persons “who seek to harm our nation” (ICE, 2019a, n.p.). The whole idea of singling out international students as potential terrorists is rather disturbing (Treyster, 2003) to say the least, yet this is exactly how the government is able to justify its restrictive immigration policies related to international students in the eyes of the public.

The most important institutions for young people in our society are education and work (Besen-Cassino, 2014). A global survey with over 150,000 respondents showed that the ability to smoothly transition from education to the world of work was of significant importance for students: for 69% of the respondents, improving career prospects was their main driver for an international study (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016). Yet, strict immigration policies make it difficult for many international students to fully realize that goal.

Unfortunately, the biggest assumption about international students studying in the United States is that they do not need to work because they are wealthy. Indeed, one of the requirements to obtain a nonimmigrant student visa to the United States is to prove one’s financial competency (U.S. Department of State, 2019). However, just because a student is able to provide an impressive bank statement, does not at all mean that they are wealthy. In fact, “the visa requirement concerning financial support does not test the financial security of
students and their families. It tests their shrewdness in dealing with immigration department systems” (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010, p.101). Ultimately, not all international students come from money. In fact, there are research studies attesting to the notion that international F-1 students come from various financial backgrounds. For example, a 2012 study conducted by the World Education Services (Choudaha, Orosz, & Chang, 2012), found that almost 50% of the U.S. bound international students had low financial resources. A more recent study confirmed the socioeconomic stratification and inequality among international students, having found that lower- and middle-income students had to pool together multiple resources to fund their education, putting a considerable financial strain on their families (Glass, Stretwieser, & Gopal, 2019).

Many international students struggle financially (Derous & Ryan, 2008; Kwadzo, 2014; Shih & Brown, 2000; Toutant, 2009), and scholars need to address their financial insecurity by conducting more in-depth studies that would specifically focus on this issue. It is time to draw our attention to the fact that international students are not just numbers, not just a commodity; they are first and foremost human beings who are entitled to their natural rights on the simple basis that they are humans.

**Significance of the Problem**

There is a great deal of scholarship that examines international students from such perspectives as internationalization of higher education; assimilation and social adjustment; skilled migration, global competition for talent and brain-drain; language acquisition and academic performance; political economy and commercialization, as well as national security, all of which are addressed in Chapter 2.
Despite the impressive corpus of scholarly work that is admittedly indispensable to the educated debate about international students, there is a dearth of research that looks at this population’s needs through a human rights lens. As temporary migrants, nonimmigrant students have limited access to legal rights and entitlements their U.S.-citizen and other privileged resident peers get to enjoy, specifically within the category of economic and social rights outlined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [ICESCR] (UNGA, 1966a).

Precisely for that reason, and because international students are no longer directly protected by the laws of their native countries once they move to the United States, this population needs to be covered by universal human rights (Marginson, 2012). Unfortunately, the application of those rights is rather incomplete for non-citizens because national laws are designed to first and foremost protect the rights of their own citizens. Human rights outlined in the UDHR (UNGA, 1948) and ICESCR (UNGA, 1966a) however, apply equally to all people, regardless of their immigration status. This is exactly why the rights of international students should be positioned and adjudicated within an international framework that includes non-citizens. It just makes logical sense that F-1 students should be protected on the international level on a simple basis that they are international students.

International students in the United States who earn while they learn, is a significantly understudied population. Therefore, closing the literature gap would provide a great value to the existing scholarship on international students. Voice and visibility are other significant aspects of the study. It is not clear how many international F-1 students are experiencing hardship at work; it is difficult to obtain such data because nobody keeps track of how satisfied international students are in a workplace. It is also not clear what percentage of
those students are vulnerable or being mistreated, therefore, it is essential to heighten our society’s awareness about the issue. It is that subset of international students who are employed while they are in school, be they engaged in legal or else irregular type of work, that my study focuses on.

**Overview of Methodology**

This multi-method project combined primary data collection with policy analysis to investigate the lived experiences of international students with respect to employment and economic opportunity. Based on a case study anchored in the New England region, in-depth interviews were conducted with current and former international F-1 students who were engaged in the U.S. labor market as F-1 nonimmigrant aliens. Thirty-eight F-1 student participants who were presently residing in the United States were selected through snowball sampling.

In addition, multi-site data collection focused on interviews with stakeholders, such as international student advisors and members of international student advocacy organizations. Selected through snowball-, informant- and network sampling, 22 stakeholder participants’ contribution provided me the opportunity to learn about international students’ experiences from a different angle.

The primary goal of the study was to generate situated knowledge on the lived experiences of the participants. Therefore, a case study research design was selected for this exploratory inquiry due to its effectiveness in the application towards policy evaluation where no reliable measures of its impact and adequacy currently exist (Yin, 2002), especially in a situation where a holistic approach to research is desired and when an in-depth understanding of a specific population’s lived experiences is necessary (Gummesson, 1991).
The following study was founded in the transdisciplinary research process that took into account the diversity of the real world (Pohl & Hirsch Hadorn, 2007) and transcended disciplinary boundaries (Augsburg, 2014; Bergmann, Jahn, Knobloch, Krohn, Pohl, & Schramm, 2012; Elbow, 2008; Klein, 2000; Leavy, 2011; Nicolescu, 1999; Pohl & Hirsch Hadorn, 2007). Different from a traditional model of research with its linear set of practices (Luker, 2010), this study’s research design was constructed around the real-world complexity of problem constellations and aimed to identify gaps in the existing knowledge (Bergmann et al., 2012). To understand the real needs of international students living and working in the United States while pursuing their post-secondary degrees, theories and practices from such disciplines as higher education, labor studies, immigration policy and human rights were intertwined to create an iterative research methodology that took into consideration all of the scholarly areas related to the central issue of socio-economic survival strategies of international students.

To feature the voices of the study participants, I took extensive notes during the interviews and confirmed their accuracy with the study participants upon the completion of our conversations. I did not record my interviews, as I had found at the outset of the data collection process that being recorded, significantly decreased study participants’ desire to share their stories in a genuine matter.

A long process of data analysis was accomplished through numerous rounds of manual coding. I found it to be the best strategy to code and analyze the empirical data simultaneously, as it allowed for a compilation of more comprehensive and accurate findings. The goal of the coding process that was concurrent with the analysis development, resulted in a rich and highly organized narrative that presented extensive explanations for participants’
experiences and behaviors. Questions that were most relevant to this qualitative study were open-ended and provided a platform for my interlocutors to speak freely about their unique experiences without being framed to think in a certain direction and towards a particular perspective.

The ultimate study findings cannot be generalized to fit all international students studying in the United States. Generalizability was not of crucial importance here, however. What represents the strength of the data collection method, is its depth and exposure to the lives of individuals whose unique experiences have the potential to shed light on some of the bigger social problems that have yet to be tied to international students.

**Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

This study explores the nature of a collective identity imposed on international students by powerful actors and addresses the issues of inequality and exclusion that can be traced to this population. Even though we often do not think about international students in terms of those frameworks, it is important to recognize that those very frameworks are the ones that can help us identify what needs to be done to support international students studying in the United States.

The study’s conceptual framework is informed by the following theoretical approaches that guide the research questions: holistic framework of human rights, human development and capability theory, as well as globalization and neoliberalism in relation to higher education. The aforementioned theoretical paradigms have common ethical, social and economic underpinnings that are central to the main inquiry of the study. Therefore, by linking them to an extensive analysis of empirical data and policy intricacies, I was able to
draw a comprehensive picture of the authentic experiences of international F-1 students living and working in the United States.

**Human rights framework.** From the human rights theoretical angle, I am able see international students for who they really are – human beings, who, just like everyone else, have a right to life of dignity. International students’ rights should not be defined by their immigration status. Therefore, from the human rights perspective, international students who want or need to work in the United States for whatever reason, should be able to do so without any restrictions.

My epistemological perspective is shaped by the natural law theories of morality that assert human rights as innate and inalienable (Fuller, 1964; Hutcheson, 1755; Locke, 1691; Paine, 1791; Smith, 1759) as well as the contemporary doctrine of human rights that rests upon the notion of moral universalism (Chomsky, 2002; Dworkin, 1977; Finnis, 1980; ICESCR, UNGA, 1966a; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR], UNGA, 1966b; Orend, 2002; Pogge, 1995; The UN Charter, UN, 1945; UDHR, UNGA, 1948). By applying a human rights framework to the analysis of employment-related immigration policies outlined by the U.S. government in relation to international F-1 students, I aim to reconceptualize the ways in which the issues of their socio-economic well-being have been traditionally addressed in the academic world.

A human rights framework is a holistic framework that stresses the universality, interdependency, and equality of all human rights (Marks, 2005). A holistic human rights approach rejects traditional, hierarchical distinctions between civil and political rights and economic, social, and cultural rights; it views with skepticism those governments that claim to endorse human rights in general while ignoring certain categories of rights (Nickel, 2008).
MacNaughton and Frey (2011) endorse the utilization of this framework in relation to work rights advocacy, specifically within the context of the ICESCR (UNGA, 1966a), an international human rights instrument that determines and promotes the right of every person to free choice of employment regardless of their status.

It is important to stress here, that a human rights perspective on public policy emphasizes the State’s need to express and implement its international obligations through public policy without explaining how it is done. The goal of a human rights framework is to set the objectives, not the means; to fulfill rights, not solve specific problems (Vazquez & Delaplace, 2011). Therefore, in this study, I am not offering an ultimate solution to the addressed issues, but rather attempting to raise awareness of the social problem and suggest a new perspective through which to consider it.

**Capability theory.** According to the capability perspective (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1992, 1999), international students should be able to freely choose their job, and today’s policies, guiding their access towards that opportunity, should be configured in a way that would enhance their capability to do so, not prevent them from it. The capability approach is a framework that can effectively assess the adequacy of current policies as it emphasizes the importance of international students’ freedom to choose the type of life they truly value. One’s capability for work, therefore, is what defines F-1 students’ freedom to live a life that they have a reason to value (Bonvin, 2012).

It is the duty of each nation to restore and enhance capability sets, allowing the opportunity of individuals to translate their formal rights and freedoms into the real rights and freedoms (Bonvin and Farvaque, 2006). The type of work international students consider valuable is completely up to every individual, however. There is no uniform definition of
‘valuable job’ (Bonvin, 2012). Capability for work is also a matter of individual choice. For example, not all individuals have a reason to value work. Therefore, capability for work also implies one’s capability not to engage in employment (Bonvin and Farvaque, 2006), nevertheless, it should always promote development, call for empowerment and consider social context at large (Bonvin, 2012).

Human capability approach advocates for enabling all people to have the capability to pursue their own goals; it has been shown to add to a more traditional global ethics approach of the human rights and is a good fit for a variety of topics that focus on the problems that arise from globalization (Kleist, n.d.). Amartya Sen defines capability as a real possibility that is not confined by external powers, and Martha Nussbaum argues that people should not only have access to exercise their capabilities, but also need to be able to do it in a truly human way (Kleist, n.d.).

International F-1 students need equal access to the U.S. labor market, as employment is one of the most basic means by which people are able to contribute to the development of their identities, social relationships, and full participation in the life of their communities. International students are capable of undertaking different types of jobs, yet current immigration policies do not allow them to hold such capabilities. When F-1 students are deprived of their rights to fully exercise their capabilities, such as their human right to work (§ 23, UDHR, UNGA, 1948), it results in loss of self-confidence, economic insecurity, and disruption of their social life. See Figure 1 in Appendix F for the visual representation of the human capability theory in application to international F-1 students who want to work in the United States.
Neoliberal perspective. From the neoliberal perspective, international students are not viewed as undesirable aliens; on the contrary, the United States seeks continuity and growth of the international student flow, as these students contribute billions of dollars to the U.S. economy. However, the State also wants to make sure that this nonimmigrant flow does not make claims on employment, so it intensifies the enforcement of immigration regulations.

U.S. employment-related immigration policies outlined for F-1 nonimmigrants in particular, deprive international students of their human right to engage in employment of their choice and are designed to control the labor market by protecting it from the foreigners, which can be seen as a valid argument on behalf of the U.S. government and concerned citizens. However, it is also important to acknowledge that at the same time, the contribution of international students to the economy is crucial for the United States, hence it is in the government’s interest to ensure the stability and continuity of the international student flow.

An ongoing neoliberalization of the higher education industry is visible in the dramatic increases in tuition coupled with the growing numbers of international students who are often viewed as the worthy subjects of diversity promotion (Kreiter, 2013). Neoliberalism is an ideology that privileges market rationalities as the mode of structuring diverse forms of economic and social activity, and in the context of higher education, this has led to the generation of economic value being the driving force at post-secondary institutions. The reason why neoliberalism does not work in practice, is because the chaos of individual interests can easily end up prevailing over order, leading to social anarchy or nihilism (Harvey, 2005). So, what we witness as a result, is a growth in social inequality. And higher education plays an important role in this process, as it contributes to the spread of the
seemingly noble ideology that in reality is a mere illusion of freedom. When it comes to international students, not only their successes and failures get interpreted as voluntary and individual, rather than systematic and policy-related through the neoliberal lens, their entire livelihoods represent nothing more than a simple commodity.

Access to labor market is the ‘forbidden fruit’ for international students, yet it is also a low hanging one that is seemingly easy to pick through higher education. However, current immigration policies prohibit access to most forms of employment to international F-1 students, and in order to gain access to the U.S. labor market, international students have to navigate through a complex labyrinth of employment-related immigration policies. See Figure 2 in Appendix F for the visual representation of the ‘forbidden fruit’ concept.

**Dissertation Outline**

This study explores the impact of current employment-related U.S. immigration regulations on international F-1 students’ socio-economic well-being. I argue that work is a human right and that international students are being deprived of that right through the restrictive policies imposed on them by the U.S. government. Chapter 2 provides an overview of current scholarship on international students and incorporates a critical evaluation of existing research related to the main question of this study. Due to its transdisciplinary nature, the study offers an amalgamation of published scholarly knowledge from multiple disciplines and discusses the nature of international students’ experiences from statistical, historical, economic, immigration, higher education, and ethical perspectives. Policy analysis intertwined within the literature review chapter suggests the need for a methodological expansion.
Chapter 3 describes the research design, sample, methods, data analysis, and positionality. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the findings obtained from international student participants during in-depth interviews. Chapter 4 covers the topics of exclusion and inequality experienced by F-1 students at the hand of restrictive employment-related immigration policies. Chapter 5 uncovers international students’ resilience and fortitude along with innovative ways in overcoming socio-economic barriers set in front of them, while exposing the broken immigration system in the United States. Chapter 6 reveals perceptions of stakeholder participants, such as international student advisors and other involved constituents, on F-1 students’ socio-economic well-being in the face of highly restrictive immigration policies. Chapter 7 concludes with the summary of the study findings, recommendations for policy and practice, as well as future research directions.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a great deal of scholarship that examines international students from such perspectives as internationalization of higher education (Altbach, 2004, 2013; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Arthur, 2004; Horn, Hende, & Fry, 2007; King, Marginson, & Naidoo, 2011; Knight, 2004; Kondacki, Van den Broeck, & Yildrim, 2008; Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007; Varghese, 2008), assimilation and social adjustment (Chavajay, 2013; Chiu, 1995; Isibor, 2008; Jackson, Ray, & Bybell, 2013; Leong, 2015; Ra, 2016; Rajapaska & Dundes, 2002; Robie & Ryan, 1996; Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010; Will, 2016; Williams & Johnson, 2011), as well as skilled migration, global competition for talent and brain-drain (Adnett, 2010; Bratsberg, 1995; Chellaraj, Maskus, & Mattoo, 2005; Douglass & Edelstein, 2009; Maskus, Mobarak, & Stuen, 2013; Mcgill, 2018; Montoya, 2018; National Research Council, 2005).

Additionally, there is an abundance of scholarly literature on international students that focuses on such important topics as language acquisition and academic performance (Banjong, 2015; Coleman, 1997; Fu, Machado, & Weng, 2018; Heng, 2018; Kuo, 2011; Lin, 2012; Ramsay, Barker, & Jones, 1999; Ravichandran, Kreтовics, Kirby, & Ghosh, 2017; Trice & Eun, 2007; Wolf & Phung, 2019), political economy and commercialization (Haupt, Krieger, & Lange, 2014; Hegarty, 2014; International Trade Administration [ITA], 2016; Lee, Maldonado, & Rhoades, 2006; Martin, 2009; Robertson, 2009; Ruby, 2015; Schachter, 2016).
2007; Trilokekar, 2015), as well as national security (Brzozowski, 2003; Campbell, 2005; Glasser, 2002; ICE, 2019a; Johnson, 2003; Khatcheressian, 2003; Lawler, 2000; National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 2004; Treyster, 2003; Whitaker, 2003).

The vast majority of scholarly literature, however, tends to research international students in the United States either within the context of political economy, where students are viewed as an industry, or within the framework of higher education, where they are portrayed as just another type of student population that needs to be served on a college campus. The popular frameworks within which international students are being portrayed in the existing research corpus, however, rarely focus on experiences of F-1 students in a workplace.

Since this study was founded in the transdisciplinary research process, the following literature review incorporates an amalgamation of published scholarly knowledge from multiple disciplines. In addition, there are parts where primary data analysis of archival documents, such as public laws and statues, is implemented. Chapter 2 is hereby organized by themes in the following order: International Students in the Global Context and in the United States; International students in the United States: A Historic Overview; International Students as Capital: A Political Economy Perspective; International Students as Threat: An Immigration Policy Perspective; International Students Within the Context of Higher Education, and International Students as Human Beings: An Ethics Perspective.

**International Students in the Global Context and in the United States**

**Numbers.** According to the Project Atlas of the Institute of International Education [IIE], a global research initiative that produces data on worldwide student mobility, in the
year of 2018, there were over five million students studying outside of the country of their origin (IIE, 2018). The top five destination countries for internationally-bound students were the United States of America (22%), the United Kingdom (10%), China (10%), Australia (7%), and Canada (7%). Leading places of origin of international students for the top host countries identified above were the following: United States – China, India, and South Korea; the United Kingdom – China, United States, and Germany; China – South Korea, Thailand, and Pakistan; Australia – China, India, and Nepal, and finally, Canada – China, India, and South Korea, identical to the United States.

Despite welcoming the largest number of foreign students worldwide (22% out of the total of over five million international-bound students), in the year of 2018, the United States hosted the smallest share of international students in comparison to the total number of students enrolled in the U.S. post-secondary institutions – only 5.5%, as compared to Australia (32%), the United Kingdom (21%), Canada (18.3%), and New Zealand (15.2%) (IIE, 2018).

According to the 2019 Open Doors Report published annually by the IIE, the number of international students studying in the United States during the 2018/2019 academic year hit an all-time high with the total number of 1,095,299 international students, a 75% increase from a decade ago when there were 623,805 international students reported to be studying in the United States during the 2008/2009 academic year (IIE, 2019, 2009). In the 2018/2019 academic year, the top places of origin for international students in the United States were China (369,548 students), India (202,014 students), and South Korea (52,250 students) (IIE, 2019).
The most popular fields of study were Engineering (21.1%), Math/Computer Science (18.6%), and Business/Management (16.6%) (IIE, 2019). More students were reported to be choosing to stay for a practical training post-graduation, however the numbers of newly enrolled students were declining. In 2017, for the first time since the period following the 9/11 attacks, the United States witnessed a decline by nearly 10,000 students (IIE, 2017), and in 2019, the numbers of new enrollments continued to be decreasing (0.9% decline since 2018) (IIE, 2019).

In a world that is driven by knowledge-based economy, the competition for global talent is rapidly growing, pushing countries to develop and implement new policies to attract highly-skilled workers (Czaika, 2018). International student recruitment strategies built on employment friendly policies and pathways to permanent migration, have long been seen as advantageous by countries like Canada and Australia (Sa and Sabzalieva, 2018). Meanwhile, in the United States, limited employment options pre and post-graduation as well as the lack of clear pathways towards permanent residency in general, discourage internationally bound students from choosing the United States as their destination country (The Economist, 2016).

This can be traced to the evidence presented above that confirms that despite welcoming the largest number of internationally-bound students worldwide (22%), the United States host the least amount of international students (5.5%) as compared to its total higher education population, which was 19,828,000 in the 2018-2019 academic year (IIE, 2019). In addition, the supply of work visas in the United States continues to be rather dismal. For example, in April of 2019, the USCIS received 201,011 H-1B temporary work visa petitions for fiscal year 2020 (USCIS, 2019a), almost three times the number of allocated H-1B visa slots (85,000 quota cap) by current regulations.
Definitions. There are many overlapping definitions of ‘international students’ (Migration Data Portal, 2020). For example, the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD] (2020), defines international students as a ‘subset of foreign students’ who move from their native country with a purpose of studying. OECD gives a more general definition to foreign students, specifying that those are students who are simply ‘not citizens’ of the countries in which they are enrolled, even if they were born there or have been long-term residents there.

USCIS refers to international students as foreign students on a temporary nonimmigrant visa and utilizes the term ‘nonimmigrant student’ in relation to their legal status (USCIS, 2020a). USCIS defines an F-1 nonimmigrant student as a person who has entered the United States to study full-time at an accredited academic institution or in a language training program (USCIS, 2020b). From the perspective of the U.S. government and in accordance with 8 USC §1101(a)(15)(F)(i), international F-1 students are ‘nonimmigrant aliens’ who have a residence in a foreign country and who plan to depart the United States when their course of study is completed, however, “by the conventional definitions and statistical criteria of migration, such students are migrants” (King and Findlay, 2012, p.259).

The UN in particular, sees any person who moves to another country for a period of at least one year, as an ‘international long-term immigrant’, where the host country becomes their new country of usual residence (UN, 1998). This definition matches international F-1 students precisely, as they reside in the United States for several years while completing their programs of study. The UN also states that foreign students, i.e. citizens departing to study abroad, fall under the category that is, in fact, utilized for the compilation of international
migrant statistics. Ultimately, the UN gives international students the following definition: “foreigners admitted under special permits or visas allowing them to undertake a specific course of study in an accredited institution of the receiving country” (UN, 1998, p. 14).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] Institute of Statistics [UIS] (2020), utilizes the term ‘internationally mobile students’, and refers to it when speaking of students who have crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in the host country, where the country of destination of a given student is different from their country of origin (UIS, 2020).

Murphy (2014) utilizes the term ‘nonlabor immigrants’ in relation to international students. Kretsedemas (2011) refers to them as a subtype of ‘useful economic migrants’ with temporary legality. Robertson (2013) refers to international students as education migrants or almost migrants and argues that international students are in itself a form of labor migration, depending on whether their primary goal is education for immigration or immigration for education. Similarly, King and Findlay (2012) call international students – ‘student migrants’ with reference to students who decide to move long-distance for a longer period of study, such as an entire degree course, because such move leads to the issues of non-return and potential brain drain.

Ultimately, there is no universal agreement about the definition of who international students are (Ruby, 2015). What everyone seems to agree with, however, is that legally, international students are defined as aliens. The Immigration and Nationality Act [INA] §101 (a)(3) (last amended in 2002) applies the term ‘alien’ to any person who is not a citizen or national of the United States. Therefore, since F-1 international students are neither, they can
be legally called aliens. Another term that seems to fit many views on what exactly international students represent, is the term ‘other’, and other is usually a short step from dangerous (Marginson, 2012). Definitively, such perception leaves international students who already find themselves in a rather inferior status of mobile non-citizens, feeling disempowered and vulnerable (Marginson, 2012).

**International Students in the United States: A Historic Overview**

**Early Stage.** Until 1855, students did not have any special immigration status, as migration was not as restrictive as it is today. The first legislation that recognized a category of temporary immigrants was the Carriage of Passengers Act of 1855 (Pub. L. 33-213, 1855), and then – Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Pub. L. 47-126, 1882), which specified that students were exempt from exclusion. Section six of the Chinese Exclusion Act introduced an ‘exempt’ status for teachers, students, merchants, and travelers. “These exempt classes would be admitted upon presentation of a certificate from the Chinese government” (National Archives, 2018, n.p.).

More distinct categorization and development of public policy regulations for international students began with the formation of the Institute of International Education (IIE). IIE was founded in 1919 to promote greater understanding between nations and to protect the interests of international students (Wildavsky, Kelly, & Carey, 2011). It was the IIE’s first president, Stephen Duggan, who convinced the U.S. government to create a new category for international students.

IIE designed and lobbied for a new type of visa that would differentiate foreign students from everyone else trying to enter the United States. As a result, in 1921 international students became classified as aliens who required a separate student visa, so that
they could be exempt from the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 (Pub. L. 67-5, 1921). The IIE, at that time, even helped 300 Russian students to obtain scholarships and employment.

In 1924, a special “Student Third Class” passage was created at steamship lines (IIE, 2013). American universities quickly realized that they could charge foreign students a full tuition while paying much less at foreign institutions where they would send their American students for a cultural exchange (Wildavsky et al., 2011).

Ultimately, having analyzed a number of legal archives related to immigration policy, I came to a conclusion that there were no specific laws outlined for international students for a very long time. Immigration Act of 1891 (Pub. L. 51-551, 1891), for example, does not mention a single word about international students. Immigration Act of 1917 (Pub. L. 64-301, 1917), Section Three, only mentions international students in the context of their exemption from exclusion along with some other categories, such as physicians, civil engineers, teachers, artists and tourists. Finally, according to Section 13 (c) of the Immigration Act of 1924 (Pub. L. 68-139, 1924), “no alien ineligible to citizenship shall be admitted to the United States unless such alien (1) is admissible as a non-quota immigrant under the provisions of subdivision (b), (d), or (e) of section 4 or “non-quota immigrants.” Therefore, all non-quota groups, including international students (sec. 4 (e)), were exempt from both quotas and exclusion (Immigration Act of 1924, Pub. L. 68-139), which is a generally positive finding in the historical context of international students in the United states.

*Immigration Act of 1924: the very first official definition of international students in the history of the United States.* As previously mentioned, Immigration Act of 1924 (Pub. L. 68-139, 1924) categorized international students as ‘non-quota immigrants’, essentially
providing the public with the very first definition of an international student in terms of the immigration law:

\[\text{An immigrant who is a bona fide student at least 15 years of age and who seeks to enter the United States solely for the purpose of study at an accredited school, college, academy, seminary, or university, particularly designated by him and approved by the Secretary of Labor, which shall have agreed to report to the Secretary of Labor the termination of attendance of each immigrant student.} \]

(Sixty-Eighth Congress, Sess. I, Ch. 190, Sec. 4 (e), p. 155, 1924).

The most interesting thing about this definition as compared to the modern definition is that the Immigration Act of 1924 does not call students nonimmigrants, the main definitive characteristic of current international F-1 students, listed under 8 CFR, part 214 – Nonimmigrant Classes (CFR, 2020b), despite already having that category in place.

Specifically, the Act of 1924 classified aliens into four categories: 1) non-immigrants, 2) non-quota immigrants, 3) preferred quota immigrants, and 4) quota immigrants. Ultimately, according to that classification, international students (e) fell under the “non-quota immigrant” category, together with (a) certain relatives of resident American citizens, (b) returning resident aliens, (c) persons born in other American countries, (d) ministers and professors, while the non-immigrant category included visitors, government officials, and some other (Jessup, 1926).

Immigration Act of 1924 also introduced a section that resembles the government’s first attempt to establish the rule for the maintenance of such non-quota immigrants’ status, stating that when the expiration of time for which [international students] were admitted or if they failed to maintain the status in which they were admitted, would have to leave the United States. (Sixty-Eighth Congress, Sess. I, Ch. 190, Sec.15, pp.162-136). The policy also established a rule for schools to report to the government the date of termination of their international students’ study, threatening to prohibit them from hosting any more foreign
students if they failed to comply: “if any such institution of learning fails to make such reports promptly the approval shall be withdrawn” (Sixty-Eighth Congress, Sess. I, Ch. 190, Sec. 4 (e), 1924). This is where the notorious rule on schools’ mandatory reporting of students essentially came from, and the current law is not a consequence of 9/11, as is often presumed by the public.

*Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952: transformation of definition for international students in the United States.* Definition of international students changes as the time goes by. In the original Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952 (Title I, Sec. 101 (a)(15)(F)), the definition of an international student reads as follows:

An alien having a residence in a foreign country which he has no intention of abandoning, who is a bona fide student qualified to pursue a full course of study and who seeks to enter the United States temporarily and solely for the purpose of pursuing such a course of study at an established institution of learning or other recognized place of study in the United States, particularly designated by him and approved by the Attorney General after consultation with the Office of Education of the United States, which institution or place of study shall have agreed to report to the Attorney General the termination of attendance of each nonimmigrant student, and if any such institution of learning or place of study fails to make reports promptly the approval shall be withdrawn.

INA of 1952 also provides a definition of the term nonimmigrant visa:

The term ’’nonimmigrant visa’’ means a visa properly issued to an alien as an eligible nonimmigrant by a competent officer as provided in this Act. (INA, 1952, Title I, Sec. 101 (a)(26)).

An important observation here is that the original INA of 1952 did not yet have J or M nonimmigrant categories, which are now subcategories of international students along with the F subcategory. Admission laws for nonimmigrants within INA of 1952 are outlined in Section 214 (a,b,c) and once again, as in previous major immigration acts, do not mention any specific regulations for students. What is worth mentioning, however, is the 1952 Act’s Section 215 (a) that imposed travel restrictions for nonimmigrants during war or national
emergency. That meant that international students could either be denied access to the United States based on the political situation in their country, or even be denied leaving the United States, the latter, as a side note, being a violation of one’s human right to have the freedom to leave any country and to return home (§13, UDHR, UNGA, 1948).

According to the 1952 Act, nonimmigrants could also adjust their status to a permanent resident as long as they had been in the United States for at least one year and met standard criteria for either quota or non-quota immigrant visas (INA, 1952, Title II, Chapter 5, Sec. 245 (a)). In the modern day, international students cannot just change their nonimmigrant status to an immigrant one directly on their own; generally, it can only be done either through an employer or through family reunification.

The Act of 1952 also states that nonimmigrants had to be registered and fingerprinted (Sec. 262 (a)). Failure to register would lead to a $1000 fine and up to six months in prison, or both. In addition, all aliens, including international students, had to carry their alien registration certificates at all times, and failure to comply with that law, would lead to a $100 fine or up to 30 days of prison, or both (Sec. 264 (e)). Furthermore, all aliens had to notify the Attorney General if their address changed. Failure to notify the Attorney General in writing could not only lead to a $200 fine and up to 30 days of imprisonment but could even result in deportation (Sec. 266 (b)).

Later Stage. In 1963, IIE introduced a Cooperative Service in Summer Employment and Practical Training for Foreign Students that was “developed to coordinate the efforts of community organizations in finding summer jobs for foreign students in the U.S.” (IIE, 2013, n.p.).
Immigration Act of 1990: first regulations about employment rights of international students in the United States. Immigration Act of 1990, officially “An Act To Amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to change the level, and preference system for admission, of immigrants to the United States, and to provide for administrative naturalization, and for other purposes” (Pub. L. 101-649, 1990), introduced a new temporary rule regarding international students’ right to work.

Within that act, unlike the contemporary rule that generally prohibits F-1 student to undertake non-major-related off-campus jobs, under Title II – Nonimmigrants, Subtitle B – Temporary or Limited Provisions, Sec. 221 – Off-Campus Work Authorization for nonimmigrant students, international students were allowed to work off campus for any employer, and their job did not have to be related to their field of study. Limitations did include 20 hours a week, however, and international students also had to have been in full-time status for at least one year and been in a good academic standing in order to be eligible for employment. Unfortunately, since 1997, with the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-208, 1996), international students could no longer engage in off-campus work that was unrelated to their academic journeys. The rules on F-1 students’ employment rights have not changed ever since.

Policy change advocacy in the 21st century. “S.1639 - A bill to provide for comprehensive immigration reform and for other purposes” introduced in 2007 at the 110th Congress, suggested revisions of student visas in respect to off-campus work (Sec. 418 (b)) that would allow international students to work off campus in a job that did not have to be related to their field of study. It also (Sec. 418 (d)) suggested that “certain nonimmigrant students” (specifically STEM students) would be granted a dual intent status, meaning they
would not have to prove their intention to return to their country of origin when applying for an F-1 visa. In addition, the bill supported financial assistance to international students enrolled in STEM programs through the Economic Opportunity and Immigration Reform Act of 2007 (Sec. 714 (2)) (Congress.gov, 2007)

Similarly, another bill, H.R. 1645 – Security Through Regularized Immigration and a Vibrant Economy Act (STRIVE Act of 2007), introduced at the 110th Congress, also suggested a student visa reform (Sec. 509 (b)) regarding off-campus work authorization for foreign students, where foreign students would be allowed to apply for an off-campus position not related to their field of study; yet there would still be a restriction on the amount of hours they could work: 20 hours a week while the school was in session and 40 hours a week during school vacation. Additionally, the STRIVE Act suggested that any international student who obtained a graduate degree in the United States, would be exempt from the numerical limit to become a lawful permanent resident in the United States (Congress.gov, 2007).

Another legislation introduced by Senators Ted Kennedy and Arlen Specter on May 21, 2007 (S. Amdt 1150 to S. 1348) also suggested that international students holding F visas should be allowed to work off campus (Haddal, 2008). Ultimately, there is a track record of attempts on behalf of certain members of the U.S. government to implement change to the current employment-related immigration policies for international F-1 students, which is a positive finding. However, those are just that, attempts, and we just have to wait and see what the future brings.

**Current policy analysis.** The following section analyzes current U.S. immigration policies related to the employment rights of international F-1 students. I conduct my analysis
through a human rights lens to identify whether the national law aligns with the international human rights standards. Findings suggest that current regulations related to F-1 students’ work-related entitlements are highly restrictive and exclude international students from free participation in the U.S. labor market. The U.S. government is violating international students’ human right to free choice of employment. My advocacy position, therefore, seeks a transformational change within the area of immigration law that would allow international F-1 students to have more socio-economic freedom in the United States.

**Brief overview of 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9).** United States federal policy 8 CFR 214.2(f) (CFR, 2020a) covers all general requirements for admission, extension, and maintenance of status of those residing in the United States under the nonimmigrant category F-1, i.e. “students in colleges, universities, seminaries, conservatories, academic high schools, elementary schools, other academic institutions, and in language training programs.”

Immigration policies pertaining to international F-1 students rights to work that are specifically defined as “employment”, are outlined within part 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9) of the immigration law, the main target for critical evaluation presented in my analysis. Despite being work-related, the policies on CPT and OPT are not defined as “employment” within the law. Being placed under the “practical training” category (8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)), which is separate from the “employment” category, CPT and OPT are considered to be a part of international F-1 students’ academic journey, rather than employment journey.

Since my primary goal is to evaluate policies that are defined as “employment” within the U.S. immigration law pertaining to international F-1 students, I am not analyzing the policies on “practical training” here. Since the U.S. government itself does not legally
define such practical training as employment, but rather places it under a completely separate
category, following its logic, I am abstaining from including it in my analysis.

As such, international students’ employment rights in particular, are outlined in
section nine (8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)), which is one of 19 sections listed under the 8 CFR 214.2(f)
law. Section nine contains three categories under which international students residing in the
United States on an F-1 visa may seek work, considered they are able to meet a myriad of
conditions: (i) on campus; (ii) off campus, and (iii) work at an international organization, the
context of which is unraveled further.

*Policy analysis measures.* The main concern of this analysis is with the U.S.
immigration policies’ incompliance with the international human rights standards and their
core values, specifically in relation to the human right to work and free choice of
employment. For this reason, the policies on international students’ work rights, specifically
identified as “employment” under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9), are hereby dissected and measured
against the two main elements of the human rights-focused public policy [HRFPP] value
structure: people’s empowerment and international human rights standards (Vazquez &
Delaplace, 2011).

According to Vazquez and Delaplace (2011), the HRFPP is guided by human dignity,
which is not only the central element of human rights but is also their ultimate goal. HRFPP
identifies people’s empowerment and compliance with international human rights standards
as the two main elements that need to be addressed by those who analyze public policy.
People’s empowerment means putting power into the hands of the right-holder whose
capacity for self-determination is often limited by economic, cultural, social, and political
factors (UN Social Development Network [UNSDN], 2015; Vazquez & Delaplace, 2011).
Whereas lack of self-determination, or one’s capability to be in control of their own choices in life, leads to powerlessness (Fukuda-Parr, 2003; Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999).

Empowerment is a mechanism through which people can identify the difference between what is perceived to be a reality and what this reality can become (Page & Czuba, 1999).

International students need to feel empowered to be in control of their own lives and to have the capacity for meaningful development of their personalities. Therefore, I utilize people’s empowerment as the first element for my assessment of international students’ work-related immigration regulations.

With regard to the compliance with the international human rights standards, the second aspect of my analytical process, I measure the degree to which the U.S. policies align with four international standards, specifically with the UDHR (UNGA, 1948), ICESCR (UNGA, 1966a), ICCPR (UNGA, 1966b), and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (UNGA, 1965).

**People’s empowerment.** Empowerment is about enabling all people to have the capability to pursue their own goals and live a meaningful life (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999). Whether current immigration policies allow international students to hold such capabilities, is the main concern of my investigation. It is important to analyze these policies through a social justice lens also to see if they are conducive to human development. Human development priorities are about removing restrictions and being able to exercise choices to pursue a life of dignity (Fukuda-Parr, 2003). International students’ employment rights analysis through this line of thinking reveals the extent to which the U.S. government empowers this population’s capacity for development and helps us better understand the implications of such policies for international students’ socio-economic well-being.
**F-1 on-campus employment.** According to 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i), international students on an F-1 visa may only work on campus. Such employment must not exceed 20 hours a week while school is in session, however, full-time on-campus work is allowed when school is not in session, as long as an F-1 student intends to enroll full-time for the next regular academic year.

At first, this regulation reads as quite reasonable, and international students looking to get a job on campus, might view this prospect as something relatively feasible. However, the law proceeds with an exception to the above rule, stating that such employment is only possible if international students do not “displace United States residents.” This very short remark, almost hidden within the 373-words-long paragraph, automatically strikes out the entire presumed right of international students to freely choose already limited in many aspects, on-campus work.

Such a loophole within the law creates an outlet for on-campus employers to give preference to American students over international students who might be applying for the same position. This, ultimately, allows legal discrimination against international students who, at the very outset, might already be seen as not the most desirable workers, for such reasons as limited English skills or the need to apply and wait for their Social Security Cards to arrive, which can delay their start day at work.

For what is presented as international F-1 students’ employment right within this section of the policy, in actuality, is nothing more than a facade. International students are technically allowed to apply for jobs on campus, but at the same time they are placed at a disadvantage with the U.S. residents by the same very law that outlines their right to seek on-campus work. Therefore, it is evident that by no means this section of the law addresses
international students’ capacity for development, nor it is formulated in a way that would promote international students’ socio-economic well-being.

*F-1 off-campus employment.* The next section within the “employment” sub-part of the immigration regulations outlined for international F-1 students, i.e. 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(ii), focuses on off-campus employment. The policy states that such employment is only an option in case of circumstances that result in severe and unforeseen economic hardship, which “may include loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the part of the student, substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate, inordinate increases in tuition and/or living costs, unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses” (8 CFR 214.2 (f)(9)(ii)(C)). Presented from a rather drastic angle to begin with, this ‘employment option’ policy proceeds with even more details on the conditions that have to be met by those who decide to pursue it.

Firstly, this policy only applies to international students who are able to prove the potential hardship. They can do so by providing the USCIS with “substantial evidence”, such as a death certificate of their parent or primary sponsor.

Secondly, should the evidence be available, international students need to mail it out together with the completed and signed employment authorization form I-765 and a hefty $410 service fee (USCIS, 2020c).

Thirdly, international students may only apply for this type of work authorization if they can meet a number of pre-conditions, i.e. an F-1 student:

(a) would have to have completed at least one year of full-time study at the time of the application,
(b) would have to have been in good standing at the time of the application,

(c) pre-conditions (a) and (b) would have to be verified by their Designated School Official (DSO), an employee at the school dedicated to overseeing and assisting F-1 students (DHS, 2014), and

d) would have to demonstrate that acceptance of employment would not interfere with their studies (8 CFR para. 214.2 (f)(9)(ii)(C)).

To top it off, even if an F-1 student meets every single condition and pre-condition related to their application for this emergency type employment, the USCIS has the luxury of an extensive timeframe, 90 days, within which the decision on the application should be made.

Furthermore, in case of denial, no appeals are allowed by law (8 CFR 214.2 (f)(9)(ii)(F)(2)). And even in case of approval, an F-1 student can still only work part-time while school is in session and for a period that will not exceed one year. Should students need an extension, they may do so per 8 CFR 214.2 (f)(9)(ii)(F)(2)).

Ultimately, the nature of the employment policy depicted in the above paragraphs, knowingly designed for vulnerable students, is highly concerning. Not only it is very restrictive and legally complicated, it does not at all take into consideration the fact that potential beneficiaries of this ‘employment right’ are those in desperate situations or crises. By no means such policy can be viewed as efficient or reasonable within the very purpose of the named policy that is supposed to benefit international students experiencing unforeseen economic hardship.

F-1 employment with an international organization. The final section, 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(iii), states that international students on an F-1 visa may work for any recognized
international organization within the meaning of the International Organization Immunities Act (Pub. L. 291, 79th Congress, 1945) while pursuing their studies.

There are currently 85 organizations that meet such definition according to 22 USC §288 (USC, 2020b). International Labor Organization, the UN, and World Trade Organization are just a few examples. A job at one of such establishments does not have to be related to international students’ major, nor does it have a limit on the number of hours they are allowed to work.

International students who obtain a job offer from one of the recognized international organizations do not need to prove to their school that they have a need for a job due to hardship or a need for a practical experience that would be related to their field of study. In order to receive an approval to work for one of such organizations, one needs to be an F-1 student, be enrolled full-time, not be a border commuter student, and have a job offer from an organization.

Such policy fully allows international F-1 students to work at these organizations, however it excludes those international students who do not reside within the proximity of most of these international organizations. The vast majority of those institutions are physically located in in either New York or Washington D.C. The policy also excludes those international students who have no interest in working for those organizations.

Finally, the data shows that in the year of 2018 only 26 international students out of over a million total, have actually worked for such organizations (USCIS, 2019b). Only 26 students benefited from this policy, while the vast majority did not. Therefore, I contend that this last section on international students’ employment rights is no more inclusive than the first two.
**International human rights standards.** One of the key elements of the Declaration and Program of Action adopted by the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, was the need to establish public policies that would promote and protect human rights. International human rights standards, outlined within a wide variety of international instruments, aim to empower people to exercise their human rights, enabling them to grow and develop. These standards were created not only to educate people about their human rights, but to guide them in their efforts to gain the capacity to exercise those rights. The extent to which current U.S. immigration policies align with the international human rights standards is presented below.

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* In accordance with article 23.1 of the UDHR (UNGA, 1948), all members of the human family have “the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.” Given the policies outlined in 8 CFR 214.2 (f)(9)(i),(ii), and (iii), international F-1 students’ rights to work are very limited.

F-1 students may only work on campus for a limited number of hours and as long as they do not displace U.S. residents (8 CFR 214.2 (f)(9)(i)). Off-campus employment is only an option for international students who have been in the country for at least one academic year and are experiencing unforeseen economic hardships (8 CFR 214.2 (f)(9)(ii)), or if such employment takes place at one of internationally recognized organizations (8 CFR 214.2 (f)(9)(iii)).

All three sections technically provide international students with the right to work. However, such right is restricted by numerous conditions, which entirely contradicts the notions of free choice of employment. Ultimately, the U.S. policies do not align with the
standards outlined in the UDHR. However, since the Declaration is not legally binding, the United States does not have an obligation to uphold it. Therefore, the United States is not breaking any international laws here.

*International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.* ICESCR (UNGA, 1966a) is one of the main human rights instruments that focuses on the issues related to economic, social and cultural rights. The Covenant obligates all national governments that ratify it to recognize the right of everyone to work and to freely choose or accept work (art. 6.1). According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR] (2020), 169 States have already ratified the ICESCR. However, the United States is not on that list, therefore, in general terms, it does not have to abide by it.

Unfortunately, along with Comoros, Cuba, and Palau, the United States remains stuck in the signatory stage of ratification (since 1977 in the case of the United States). Yet, a signature alone is not legally binding, and is only meant to indicate the State’s intent to examine the treaty and consider ratifying it at some point (UN Treaty Collection [UNTC], 2020). If the United States were to ratify the ICESCR, however, the government would then have a legal obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the rights outlined within the Covenant, which would include the right to work.

In this vein, the United States would have to refrain from interfering with the enjoyment of the right to work for all people residing in the country (CESCR, 2006) and thus allow international students to have equal access to work. Ultimately, the U.S. policies do not align with the standards outlined in the ICESCR. However, despite it being an international law, since the United States have not officially ratified it, the country is not breaking any international laws here.
*International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.* ICCPR (UNGA, 1966b) is an international human rights treaty that commits all States parties to respect civil and political rights of individuals, such as the right to life, liberty and freedom from torture (UN, n.d.).

The Covenant has been ratified by 172 nations, including the United States, and since 1992 the United States has been under the agreement to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights outlined within this international law (OHCHR, 2020). ICCPR is a very powerful instrument that obligates the States parties to guarantee the rights outlined in the Convention to “all individuals within its territory…without distinction of any kind” (§2.1, ICCPR, UNGA, 1966b), a definition broad enough to include international students.

However, employment rights are only mentioned within the limited context of “forced and compulsory labor” (§8.3(a), ICCPR, UNGA, 1966b), against which international students may claim full legal protection from the U.S. government. Therefore, this international treaty, although ratified by the United States does not address the issue of international students’ employment constrains in full breadth.

*International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination [ICERD].* Another legally binding convention is ICERD (UNGA, 1965), which has been ratified by 182 countries, including the United States that ratified it in 1994 (OHCHR, 2020). This means that everything that is outlined within this international law should be addressed by the United States accordingly.

However, when it comes to the right to work outlined in the Convention, there is a twist. On the one hand, the ICERD §5(e)(i) (UNGA, 1965) obligates all State parties to guarantee the right to work and free choice of employment to everyone without distinction to national origin. On the other hand, the Convention does not apply to “distinctions, exclusion,
restrictions or preferences made by a State Party to this Convention between citizens and non-citizens” (ICERD §1.2, UNGA, 1965). Therefore, international students automatically become excluded from international protection under this law.

**Conclusion.** Employment policies for international students seeking to work while pursuing their studies that are outlined in 8 CFR 214.2 (f)(9) remain profoundly restrictive in the United States. Unfortunately, these policies are by no means designed to empower international students to exercise their natural freedom. Furthermore, they are not at all inclusive of international students’ basic human rights, such as the right to work and the right to development.

Ultimately, international students’ rights should not be defined by their immigration status, particularly because they are not protected by their home country laws when residing outside its jurisdiction. In a democratic society, it is how we treat foreign nationals that ultimately tests our own humanity (Cole, 2003). By focusing on what is supposed to be right, we forget about what is actually right and humane for the real people affected by the injustice.

Nevertheless, what is truly concerning, is that even within the powers of international law, as evidenced by the data presented above, international F-1 students remain to be unprotected. Policy change is necessary to ensure that international students in the United States are allowed an opportunity to gain off-campus employment like the rest of their fellow U.S. citizen or permanent resident students.

Such change would result in increased levels of social and economic equity amongst all members of an academic community and beyond. This opportunity would help
international students develop skills that are necessary to compete in the global economy and live a life of dignity.

**International Students as Capital: A Political Economy Perspective**

International students bring in capital from foreign markets in the form of tuition fees and living expenses, which, in turn, support local communities they live in for a number of years (ITA, 2016). Indeed, international students make a significant contribution to universities’ financial well-being (Hegarty, 2014) and the entire country’s economy (Johnson, 2003). The fact that education is included in the General Agreement on Trade in Services, allows governments included in the agreement to recognize education as a trade ‘good’, positioning international students studying abroad as one of the delivery models of the trade in educational services (Ruby, 2015). Knight (2004), however, emphasizes that a trade framework should not be utilized with respect to higher education, as a trade model relates to globalization, not to internationalization.

Nevertheless, many studies view international education as just that, a trade. From that angle, where higher education institutions [HEI]s are presented as providers of human and intellectual capital, international students then become their consumers. The economic value those ‘consumers’ produce as a result, quantifies in billions of dollars annually. As I already mentioned earlier in this chapter, during the 2018/2019 academic year, international students studying in the United States contributed 41 billion dollars to the U.S. economy. In addition, those students supported more than 458,290 jobs (NAFSA, 2019). Needless to say, the country’s economy could benefit even more from potentially receiving even larger contributions from international students if they were allowed to work. Not only that would increase the spending power within communities, it would also attract more international
students who would choose the United States over its competitor destination countries. Starobin (2006) attested to this notion, by stating that the U.S. policies, indeed, negatively affected international students who were choosing countries like Australia and Canada over the United States as their study destinations.

In the 21st century, people have become more internationally mobile than ever before, and the number of individuals who stay abroad after graduation is continuously growing (Haupt, Krieger, & Lange, 2014). As international economic integration and globalization intensify, international income tax competition for high-skilled workers between countries will only increase (Haupt et al., 2014). The implications for less developed countries in this case, however, may also be negative in cases where their natives stay in host countries, resulting in brain drain (Haupt et al., 2014).

The incentives to align education policy to growing student mobility differs across countries, however, as some decide to adjust their education policy to changes in the permanent migration behavior, other nations choose not to. Ultimately, Haupt et al. (2014) argue that by improving education quality and reducing tuition fees for international students, developed countries would be able to gain more benefits. Montoya (2018) also suggests that policies need to change to foster effective collaboration between educators and governments and to encourage mobility of highly skilled students whose innovative ideas could bring about positive change to the entire world. Similarly, Mcgill (2018) states that if the Unites States has any interest in retaining the best talent, policies need to be more lenient for international students, so that at the end of the day, everyone could benefit from their knowledge and experiences.
There is no single theory that can fully define the notion of international migration. It is a concept that needs to be evaluated through a transdisciplinary lens that incorporates a wide variety of perspectives (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, & Taylor, 1993). What is undeniable, however, is that international student workers or ‘education migrants’ (Robertson, 2013) are a product of globalization. Globalization is a multidimensional phenomenon that can be viewed from various perspectives: economic, political, cultural, and others (Robertson & White, 2007). The World Systems theory of Wallerstein (1974) blames population movements on the structure of the world market. The theory states that the world market has evolved throughout a number of centuries and has slowly seeped into the non-capitalist geographies, causing people to feel detached from their communities where they can no longer thrive. Hence, the present world system is a product of capitalism expansion (Wallerstein, 1974).

Global capitalism leads people to believe that the new world of consumption is a better world, without taking into consideration the fact that a lot of them will never be fully capable of meeting the demands that go along with it. Ultimately, globalization encourages people to move closer to places where the money is being generated. According to Massey (1993), it is the material and ideological links to places where capital originates that become the reason of urbanization of developing societies, and this notion inevitably encourages people to move beyond national borders. From such angle, the growing number of international students around the world is an example of migration pattern that can be justified through the World Systems theory of migration. And the ideological and cultural links (Massey et al., 1993) cause more and more young people from around the world to pursue their postsecondary education in the United States and countries alike, to learn
English from young age, and to view the developed countries’ lifestyle standard as the one to strive towards.

Unfortunately, once international students get to the United States, they are perceived as temporary visitors, who will be going back, and a lot of their aspirations are being challenged by their legal status. As temporary migrants, international students have limited access to rights and entitlements. This makes them feel insecure about their non-citizen status and socially excluded (Piper, 2010). Robertson (2009) underlines that a ‘trade’ is not an ‘aid' model, therefore it would ultimately result in uneven development.

When temporary migrants participate in the labor market, they can often be found doing the work that no one else wants. We need to “assist migrants in claiming their rights and address widespread malpractices on the part of employers” (Piper, 2010, p.116). Douglass and Edelstein (2009) also suggest more flexibility in immigration policies for employment opportunities and call for their reevaluation in the face of the global competition for talent. Ultimately, many international students engage in employment to support their financial needs (Derous & Ryan, 2008; Kwadzo, 2014). Unfortunately, when international students are seeking work, colleges often do not support their aspirations (Bista & Foster, 2011), and ever-restrictive immigration policies only exacerbate the issue.

**International Students as Threat: An Immigration Policy Perspective**

**Terrorist attacks and their consequences for F-1 students.** Intensified scrutiny of international students started with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, when it was determined that one of the terrorists who participated in that horrific event, had entered the United States on a student visa (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). Things got even worse for international students after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, resulting in ever-more stringent
entry requirements and tight monitoring, all in the name of national security and public safety (Bevis & Lucas, 2007; Miyokawa, 2009).

According to the 9/11 Commission Report, one of the 19 people involved in the crime, came to the United States on a student visa. Hani Hanjour was supposed to study English as a Second Language, however, he never attended any of his classes (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004). Drastic times call for drastic measures, so the Congress, having this information in mind, decided to update the legislation to mandate the use of an electronic system to collect information on nonimmigrants from all schools and programs that hosted international visitors (Bevis & Lucas, 2007; Campbell, 2005).

Fear is a powerful tool that has been utilized for centuries by those in power against millions of gullible people. After the terrorist attacks, the U.S. government projected fear on its citizens by creating the notion of an imminent threat or invasion that could only be prevented through more restrictive policies enforcement and much tighter borders. Every new crisis prompts the United States to redefine the qualifications for memberships and elaborate instruments to insure the appropriate selection (Zolberg, 2006). And 9/11 terrorist attacks resulted in major changes to immigration policies, some of them being more reactionary in their nature than others.

**SEVIS.** Students and Exchange Visitors Information System [SEVIS] was deployed by the DHS and the Department of State in January of 2003 for the purpose of tracking and monitoring information on students and exchange visitors coming to the United States for education and cultural exchange; the reason being, protection of national security (ICE, 2020). 9/11 terrorist attacks became the main trigger of such urgent need for the database creation and implementation. Even though there already was a similar web-based tracking
system in place developed by the federal task force in 1995, as a consequence of the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, it was not being actively utilized (Bevis & Lucas, 2007).

Essentially, SEVIS became the U.S. government’s tool for screening out international-student-terrorists. Needless to say, the idea of singling out international students as potential terrorists is rather disconcerting. Currently, the SEVP program that manages SEVIS, is a part of the National Security Investigations Division of the DHS’ Homeland Security Investigations agency [HSI]. SEVP “manages information on foreign students and exchange visitors in the United States” (ICE, 2020, n.p.) and is one of eight programs within the branch that focuses on identifying persons who want to harm our nation.

Amongst those eight national security-focus programs are the Counter Proliferation Investigations Program that prevents terrorist groups from obtaining U.S. military technology and weapons of mass destruction; Export Enforcement Coordination Center that coordinates U.S. export control enforcement; Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit that investigates nonimmigrant visa holders who violate their immigration status; Human Rights Violators and War Crimes Unit that pursues foreign war criminals, persecutors and human rights abusers who seek shelter from justice in the United States; National Security Integration Center that focuses on federal and interagency partner coordination in order to protect the homeland; National Security Unit that combines the HSI’s national security and counterterrorism efforts into a single force, and finally, National Security Liaisons, a group of senior HSI personnel coordinating a variety of investigative activities (ICE, 2019a). Those powerful programs targeted at prevention or investigation of serious crime, just logically do not align with SEVP, a program that specifically monitors international students.
In addition to being continuously monitored through SEVIS, international students were also stripped off of their privacy rights under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA] (USA PATRIOT Act of 2001, Pub. L. 107-56, 2001). Generally, FERPA does not allow schools to release their students’ records without their prior consent. Thus, one would think that records transmitted through SEVIS are supposed to be covered by FERPA (Treyster, 2003). However, the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 (Pub. L. 107-56, 2001) amended FERPA to add the exception to the rule; investigation and prosecution of terrorism being the core argument (Khatcheressian, 2003).

In the eyes of many educators, SEVIS was not seen as an effective tool for fighting terrorism simply because international students compiled a very small percent of the total number nonimmigrants in the United States and, therefore, was just a waste of money and time (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). Many also believed that SEVIS was excessively intrusive (Treyster, 2003) and promoted a climate that was highly unwelcoming of international students, which, in turn, even further increased their marginalization. However, for the U.S. government, SEVIS was something that they could present to the public as an action step. So, by focusing on what seemed to be the easiest and the smallest population to manage, the government was able to do that. Ultimately, the U.S. government used SEVIS as an opportunity to say that they were in full control of at least a portion of nonimmigrant population residing in the United States. And it is understandable because from the government standpoint, if they were to admit to the American people that it was practically impossible to protect every single person at every single available moment, the public would see them as incapable of doing their job.
Ultimately, according to the U.S. government, current immigration policies outlined for international F-1 students, are out there to protect national security, which can be seen as a valid argument for many concerned citizens. However, it is clear that they do not entirely embrace the complexity of the actual phenomenon, as “people rarely realize they hold big assumptions because, quite simply, they accept them as reality” (Kegan and Lahey, 2001, p.88). Unfortunately, the United States’ society’s biggest assumption is that the law is just, and those in power have a legal solution for a wide variety of problems that arise within the diversity of our globalized world. In reality, however, it is almost impossible to achieve global justice by simply creating a number of legal restrictions, as the world is much more complex. And just because something is legal, does not necessarily mean that it is moral.

**Legal versus moral.** Each year, the fifteen executive departments and other agencies of the federal government establish a set of rules which they publish in the Federal Register. These laws then get codified and presented in what is known as the Code of Federal Regulations. The publication, which gets updated annually, has 50 titles, each representing a broad area that is subject to federal regulation (U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], n.d).

Title 8 – Aliens and Nationality represents one of those 50 areas and contains regulations that are executed in the Immigration and Nationality Act (USCIS, 2019c). Chapter I – Department of Homeland Security and Chapter V – The Executive Office for Immigration Review of the Department of Justice make up the volume of 8 CFR (GPO, n.d) and at the same time represent the main stakeholder agencies within the government that are in charge of this area’s regulatory affairs.
There are several parts within Title 8 that relate to international students. Part 214 on Nonimmigrant classes, however, contains most of the policies related to international students, specifically subpart (f) on students in F-1 status. That being clarified, one would think that this portion of the U.S. law should have all the answers in regard to international students. What is wrong about this way of thinking, is the fact that international students cannot be judged solely from one very narrow angle, such as their immigration status. International students are more than their immigration status. They are humans with their own unique needs and capabilities.

The laws should never be disregarded, but one should not assume that just because something is legal, is automatically moral. Although morality is a highly subjective concept, the laws should reflect the new developments within the modern social world at least to some extent. For example, the Constitution of the United States, which was written hundreds of years ago, lacks that same historical understanding of the importance of individual rights protection that our generation possesses, having witnessed two world wars and other historic tragedies (Kent, 2015). Although a lot of parts have been amended since the old days, the structure remains very similar. We need to realize that judicial review and legal protection based on geography, citizenship, and war is no longer pertinent to the needs of today’s highly globalized society. Bottom line, our current law enforcement methods do not work (Kent, 2015). Yet one could also argue that a lot depends on how you frame those regulations.

With regard to the equal rights of migrants, for example, we can trace two completely different trajectories of interpretations of the same law. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC] of the Department of Justice, for example, frames the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 [IRCA] in a way that emphasizes that it is a
federal law that protects individuals from discrimination based on one’s immigration status (EEOC, n.d.). Whereas USCIS underlines the fact that the IRCA was passed to prevent U.S. employers from hiring unauthorized aliens (USCIS, 2019d).

Of course, “each developed country entertains its own anti-immigrant sentiment” (Moses, 2006, p. 4), but their general conviction is that continued regulatory enforcement is undeniably effective. However, we cannot presume that all international students are potential migrants. Not every international student who comes to the United States to study intends to immigrate. In fact, only a small minority view it as possibility at the outset; majority of those who eventually become permanent residents actually change their minds during their stay (Hazen & Alberts, 2006). Those who stay, identify economic and professional factors that motivate them to make this choice, whereas those who decide to return to their home countries emphasize the importance of personal and societal factors (Hazen & Alberts, 2006). The destination choice of young Indian students, for example, aligns with U.S. immigration policies and access to higher education, however not because they are looking for permanent immigration, but because they want to gain practical experience while pursuing their studies (Kemp, 2016).

At the end of the day, official membership is important to people, as it helps them understand their place in the world and identify themselves. Landau and Freemantle (2016) talk about what it means to be ‘at home’ and what it is like to feel like a visitor at home. For some nations, formal citizenship is not as important as the feeling of a community. “Many consider their own government as careless, self-serving, and corrupt” (Landau & Freemantle, 2016, p.8), thus, the legal side of the social space goes to the background. Those who do not seem to be able to connect with their native land, begin to look elsewhere. Some move to
another country and try to assimilate with the new place. Meanwhile, the world continues to support the “right to exit, not to entry” (Cook-Martin, 2013, p. 7) notion.

**Immigration policies for international students in other countries.** On the State level, the two countries that seem to be doing much better in terms of meeting the socio-economic needs of their international students are Canada and Australia. Foreign students in Canada and Australia, unlike in the United States, have a preferred treatment for permanent immigration (Felbermayr & Reczkowski, 2014).

Those countries seem to understand that education policy, training, and social welfare shape economies and labor markets, and thus need to be designed in tandem with immigration policies if a country wants to maintain economic competitiveness on a global scale (Bertelsmann Stiftung Foundation & Migration Policy Institute, 2010). “Talent and initiative are considered to be most valuable resources” (p.28), so in order to attract talent, countries need to recognize the importance of having labor migration policies that are flexible and responsive of labor market needs (Bertelsmann Stiftung Foundation & Migration Policy Institute, 2010).

**Canada.** On June 1st of 2014, the government of Canada brought into force a number of changes that would improve international students’ experience while studying in Canada and reduce the potential for fraud and misuse of their International Student Program (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014). The changes allowed full-time international students who were enrolled at designated institutions in certain programs to work without a work permit off campus. In addition, Canada eased the conditions for students to apply for Canadian citizenship. Specifically, it reduced its residency requirement by counting the study time towards the total of its duration (ITA, 2016).
Australia. According to the Australian Government’s Home Affairs Department, international students on a Student (Subclass 500) visa may engage in employment and are allowed to work no more than 40 hours per fortnight (14 days) when course is in session and for an unlimited number of hours when the school is not in session. Furthermore, postgraduate research students in Australia have no limit on the number of work hours they are allowed to undertake while pursuing their studies, as long as they are enrolled in the coursework (Australian Government, Immigration and Citizenship, Home Affairs, 2019).

Australian immigration policies have been favoriting international students as skilled migrants since 1998. This ended up blurring the boundaries around the identities of students, workers and migrants, as more and more international students were found embedded in both formal and informal labor economies (Robertson, 2013).

International Students within the Context of Higher Education

Higher education is a field that is transdisciplinary in its nature (McGregor & Volckmann, 2011), yet the traditional character of higher education institutions has many barriers that discourage or prevent the actual collaboration between the multiple disciplines from materializing (Jacob, 2014). Tight (2012) reviewed 567 research articles published in the higher education-focused academic journals and found that 24% of them focused specifically on students’ experiences, one of eight common themes found within the higher education literature, which included: teaching and learning, course design, quality, system policy, institutional management, academic work, and knowledge.

Abdullah, Abd Aziz, and Mohd Ibrahim (2014) decided to use a similar method in their research on international students. After reviewing a sample of 497 journal articles on research conducted on international students over the past 30 years, Abdullah et al. (2014)
concluded that international students were a population that was most visible in the academic field of higher education, rather than other fields of research.

The vast majority of the academic journals that housed those articles were within a disciplinary focus of international higher education (Abdullah et al., 2014). The sample of studies talked about international students’ on-campus, academic, and social experiences, where the majority credited higher education institutions as “agents of change in enhancing students’ experiences” (p.247). Fifty three and a half percent of the sample focused on international students’ “study, living and social functions within academic and social context of a host country” (p.244); 15.1% of the articles were related to international student mobility, and 11.4% focused on the teaching, learning, and curriculum elements. Ultimately, most articles focused on the students’ “in-campus and academic experience, their interaction with various stakeholders within the institution, language competency and physiological health, as well as the students' psychological development” (Abdullah et al., 2014, p.247).

Abdullah et al. (2014) acknowledged that we were ‘going in circles’ in terms of identifying the real challenges of international students and admitted that there had been a slow progress in the area of increased ethical awareness among countries and higher education institutions in safeguarding this population throughout their experience. The researchers concluded that the discourse about globalization of education and the role of international students often failed to ‘locate’ the actual social spaces those students found themselves in, and that most of the research tended to conceptualize students’ experiences “institutionally within a top-down managerial approach or a customer service approach” (Gatfield at al.1999, as cited by Abdullah et al., 2014, p.247). Whereas a number of studies did acknowledge that the voice of internationally mobile students within the higher education

Similarly, Szelenyi and Rhoads (2006) acknowledged that studies on international students were limited to such topics as social adjustment, psychological well-being, and classroom engagement, while paying little attention to how international students’ lived experiences shaped their views as citizens, members of the global community. Indeed, a large portion of research on international students in the United States is occupied by the field of higher education. And many studies do focus on the adjustment issues of international students, such as their linguistic barriers (Coleman, 1997; Fu, Machado, & Weng, 2018; Kuo, 2011; Lin, 2012; Ramsay et al., 1999; Ravichandran, Kretovics, Kirby, & Ghosh, 2017; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Wolf & Phung, 2019), social adaptation (Akanwa, 2015; Chavajay, 2013; Chiu, 1995; Jackson, Ray, & Bybell, 2013; Robie & Ryan, 1996; Will, 2016; Williams & Johnson, 2011), academic challenges (Banjong, 2015; Heng, 2018; Ramsay, Baker, & Jones, 1999; Trice & Eun, 2007), and struggles with cultural integration (Ee, 2013; Isibor, 2008; Kusek, 2015; Leong, 2015; Ra, 2016; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwoord, 2018; Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010).

However, there are some scholarly works that do address the issues of economic well-being of international students, either directly or indirectly. For example, there are research studies that talk about the financial difficulties experienced by international students. Choudaha, Orosz, and Chang (2012) argued that there were some groups of international students who struggled financially and alerted institutions of higher education to pay close attention to their unique needs. Similarly, Toutant (2009) confirmed that some international students experienced significant financial burdens and called for the need to allow them to
work off-campus or otherwise assist students through financial aid. In addition, Banjong (2015) concluded that financial crises led to international students’ poor academic performance and stress, which in turn pushed them to seek mental health counseling.

A recent study on international students’ perceptions of value of U.S. higher education (Urban and Berlein Palmer, 2016), discovered that the three primary motivations of international students for studying in the United States were quality education, exposure to new ways of thinking, and opportunity to gain practical experience. However, the primary perceived benefits turned out to be quality education, independence, and new ways of thinking. The practical experience aspect, identified as one of the top motivations of foreign students for obtaining their higher education in the United States, landed at the very bottom of the perceived benefits scale. Overall, professional outcomes appeared to be significantly lower that students’ expectations related to professional development, while students’ personal outcomes, contrastingly, exceeded their initial expectations.

The fact that international students had the least gains in the areas of practical experience and other career-related issues, demonstrated the need of all stakeholders involved in servicing international students to revisit the current practices that hindered the achievement of international students’ professional goals. The authors admitted that “most international students desire[d] to engage in professional activities such as on-campus work, internships, etc., however the status as an international student implie[d] numerous barriers that limit[ed] access to such opportunities” (Urban and Berlein Palmer, 2016, p.169).

Kwadzo (2014) examined international students working on campus. According to research findings, international students who engaged in part-time on-campus employment did so primarily to earn money. Extra cash helped them pay for the groceries and utility bills
and prevented debt accrual. Employment also gave international students an opportunity to socialize, make American friends, and develop interpersonal and communications skills, which students believed to be a valuable asset for their future job prospects. Kwadzo (2014) concluded that international students who studied and worked concurrently, reported overall feelings of well-being, as they were generally able to find positive strategies to cope with stress related to multitasking.

According to the study conducted by Shen and Herr (2004), when international students wanted to find a job in the United States and attempted to seek guidance from their career advisor, that advisor was suddenly no longer an advisor, but a law enforcement officer, which students found rather frustrating.

Finally, another research study about international students’ employment search in the United States (Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, & Cavazos, 2011), discovered that all participating international students found it difficult to locate any information on campus that would be related to employment of foreign nationals. Half of the interviewed students found no help at the career services offices, where staff was neither empathetic nor knowledgeable about immigration regulations pertaining to their status. All students who participated in the study, believed that their foreign status prevented them from getting jobs in the United States and made it hard to compete with those who had a permanent status.

**International Students as Human Beings: An Ethics Perspective**

**Human rights.** Millions of international students around the world find themselves in a ‘gray zone’ of regulations with incomplete human rights, security and unfulfilled capabilities and do not enjoy the same protections and entitlement as citizens of their host countries (Marginson, 2012). Their ambiguous non-citizen outsider status makes them feel
vulnerable, uncertain, excluded, de-powered, subordinated, and incomplete (Marginson, 2012). Unfortunately, the engine of human rights protection is located within the national law, which often does not include the ‘outsiders’ (Marginson, 2012). International students are “insiders with legitimate issues of their human security and rights” (Marginson, 2012, p. 508), however “markets naturalize maximum price for minimum cost” (p.508) and “tend to confine human rights to those of trade and consumer protection and devolve human security to self-responsibility” (Marginson, 2012, p.508). Ultimately, institutions rarely have the desire to adjust to ‘strangers’ (Marginson, 2012).

Not all international students seek employment in the United States, and many of those who do, believe that practical work experience will ultimately help them get a job back home. However, some students are driven by economic conditions in their home countries that force them to seek employment (Farrugia, 2016). The moral argument here is that students who need to work to sustain themselves, must have the right to do so without restrictions.

According to article 23.1 of the UDHR (UNGA, 1948), the right to work and free choice of employment is a human right. The UDHR is a universal standard that recognizes the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family, including non-citizens. Having inspired many legally binding international treaties and conventions, the Declaration serves as the foundation of the international human rights law (UN, n.d.). One example of the international law that addresses the right to work and is binding on national governments (States) that have ratified it, is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). According to the ICESCR, States parties have to “recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by
work which he freely chooses or accepts” (UNGA, 1966a, ICESCR, art. 6.1). Another example is the Employment Policy Convention that obligates each Member to ensure that “there is work for all who are available for and seeking work (art. 1.2(a)) and that “there is freedom of choice of employment” (art. 1.2(c)) (International Labor Organization, 1964).

Work is important for social and economic inclusion as well as for personal development (CESCR, 2006, para. 2). Although recognized in international human rights law, employment as a human right is yet to be widely supported by the American public however, to whom the mere idea of economic and social entitlement being bona fide human rights often sounds peculiar and foreign (Harvey, 1993). The United States has taken such skeptical stance towards international law because “Americans often think of themselves as ‘exceptional’ and [therefore] care little for international opinion” (Alston & Goodman, 2012, p. 53). U.S. Presidents Reagan and Bush Sr. opposed the concept of economic and social rights [ESR] claiming the idea of such rights could be easily abused by repressive governments; Bush Jr. defined ESR as ‘aspirational’ and did not think of them as guaranteed entitlements (Alston & Goodman, 2012).

In the same manner, from a philosophical standpoint, ESR are also criticized for their obscurity (O’Neill, 2005), lack of universality in their realization capacity (Cranston, 1983), and their insufficiency in being managed through a judicial process (Neier, 2006). However, individuals, as well as communities, require access to ESR to live a life of dignity, and States have an obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill these right (CESCR, 2006). ESR are a set of human rights represented within the UDHR (UNGA, 1948) in an equal manner with the civil and political rights [CPR]: just like CPR, ESR “contain dual freedoms: freedom from the State and freedom through the State” (OHCHR, 2008, p.2.).
In the present world, where socio-economic inequalities have led to fundamental challenges to human security (Arbour, 2005), more than ever before do we need to protect and strengthen ESR. My main point is that international students’ ESR need to be respected and promoted through the U.S. policies because these individuals do not live in the economy, they live in the society, the U.S. society, the nature of which is ultimately formed through the decisions of those in power. In other words, the United States needs to implement policies that directly speak to the needs of people living within its jurisdiction, including international F-1 students, who, just like all members of the human family, deserve a life of dignity.

Employment is a critical feature of modern society, the nature of which is determined by the quality of individuals’ lives and by the degree of respect for human dignity (Budd, 2004). Work is not only one of the basic institutions within our society, but it is also one of the most important institutions for young people (Bessen-Cassino, 2014), therefore depriving international students of the right to engage in employment of their choice is cruel and counterproductive. International students should be able to create their own network of friends, colleagues and people they care about without being limited to who exactly they can affiliate with. Seventy percent of students in the United States ‘earn while they learn’ (Carnevale, Smith, Melton, & Price, 2015), which means that employment has become an essential part of one’s college experience.

Work is not simply an economic transaction; rather, it is an important vehicle that fulfills social and psychological needs of human interaction, development and growth (Budd, 2004). The value of work goes beyond one’s ability to support themselves and others; employment plays an important role in developing one’s self-worth, it connects us to our
future mentors, it helps us build prosocial relationships and a sense of community (Latessa, 2012).

Furthermore, people who work are able to make valuable contributions to society or community they live in, which in turn provides them with a sense of purpose and makes them feel useful (Dillon, 2016). The ultimate argument here is that work equates to social inclusion; it enables greater social cohesion and is good for both physical and mental health (Carew, Birkin, & Booth, 2010). Exclusion from participating in employment that falls outside of the federal policies currently outlined for nonimmigrant students, deepens economic insecurity for international students. It is through this line of reasoning that I attempt to bring in a unique perspective to the scholarship on international students, contributing to its development.

**Human development.** The quality of international students’ lives essentially stems from the policies that are not conducive to human development, however. The focus on the multidimensional aspects of well-being, provides an important framework for a type of research that looks at development, justice and social policy (Robeyns, 2005). By looking at international students’ experiences from the angle of human development, we can establish a reliable indicator of social justice. This perspective addresses a diversity of human needs and focuses on what humans are actually able to do and be rather than what all human beings should be able to do and be (Berges, 2007).

Many international students are capable to work, and for some, work might be one of the things they need in order to develop as human beings. Yet, current policies deny them access to this development, affecting their socio-economic well-being. A human development approach focuses on human rights, freedoms, and agency (Fukuda-Parr, 2003).
Human development priorities are about removing restrictions, about being able to exercise choices to pursue a life of dignity, and about the power of people to influence current policies that are targeted on bringing about social justice (Fukuda-Parr, 2003).

Ultimately, international students’ capacity for development, in other words access to opportunities that would help them live a life they want to live, is what directly affects their quality of life and measures its value. When analyzing current immigration policies utilizing the theory of human development, it becomes evident that by no means these policies address international students’ capacity for development, nor they are designed to promote international students’ socio-economic well-being. Academic literature on how rights impact human development is very limited as most analyses do not consider specific rights, but instead focus on four types of immigration status – illegal, temporary, permanent, and citizen (Ruhs, 2009), within which international students are often lost due to the in-betweenness of their nonimmigrant status.

Therefore, a study that would analyze the effects of the restrictions of some socio-economic rights, such as the right to free choice of employment, access to social benefits, and the right to permanent stay in the host country (Ruhs, 2009) in relation to international students, would mark a significant contribution to the body of knowledge that covers the intersection of immigration policy, migrant rights and human development.

International students, whose status is “both subordinated and incomplete” (Marginson, 2012, p.498), are an excluded population that is quickly growing yet is highly understudied. Research studies on international F-1 students’ experiences in a workplace are even more difficult to locate, as those experiences are invisible to the eyes of many, and students do not like to talk about them. For example, it is very common for students from
China who end up going back home after completion of their studies, to not tell the truth if they suffered because they just do not want to lose face (Poston & Luo, 2007). Needless to say, it is very difficult to measure and analyze something that people are unwilling to talk about (Benson, 2002). I argue that a shift needs to happen in the way we research experiences of international students who work while in F-1 status. The stagnant list of the “mainstream challenges” (Abdullah et al., 2014, p.248) that a significant chunk of scholarly literature on international students seems to be focusing on, needs to be expanded.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study investigated the experiences of current and former international F-1 students currently residing in the United States, focusing on how employment-related immigration policies impacted their socio-economic well-being.

Research questions: How do employment-related immigration policies affect the socio-economic well-being of international F-1 students? What do those students’ coping strategies look like in the face of such policies?

My main interest was to understand how F-1 students engaged in the workforce, made sense of the world. My goal was to learn about their perceptions and share them with the academic world. The ultimate objective of my inquiry was inclusion of voices that have not been heard, yet are so important in understanding ways in which institutions around the globe shape young minds.

The entire data collection process took place during the period of six consecutive months, from April 2019 to September 2019. Since none of the information obtained from the study participants was recorded in a manner where identity of the human subjects could be readily ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, per 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2), this study was granted an exempt status by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Massachusetts Boston on March 28th, 2019.
The outline of this chapter is as follows: Research Design; Sample; Methods; Data Analysis, and Positionality.

**Research Design**

This exploratory case study was founded in the transdisciplinary research process that transcended disciplinary boundaries (Augsburg, 2014; Bergmann, Jahn, Knobloch, Krohn, Pohl, & Schramm, 2012; Elbow, 2008; Klein, 2000; Leavy, 2011; Nicolescu, 1999; Pohl & Hirsch Hadorn, 2007). Since the topic of socio-economic well-being of international F-1 students engaged in the workforce intersected a variety of academic fields, it needed to be analyzed from a multi-paradigmatic angle. This research revolved around international students, immigration policies, employment rights, and the notions of integration and exclusion. Therefore, due to a transdisciplinary nature of the research question, an inquiry-based rather than a discipline-based approach was utilized in the process of data collection. The following bodies of knowledge were concluded to be more directly related to the research inquiry: human capital, higher education, migration studies, and human rights.

Because a transdisciplinary research process takes into account the diversity of the real world (Pohl & Hirsch Hadorn, 2007), different from a traditional model of research with its linear set of practices (Luker, 2010), this study’s research design was constructed around the real-world complexity of problem constellations and aimed to identify gaps in the existing knowledge (Bergmann et al., 2012). A case study research design was selected for this exploratory inquiry due to its effectiveness in the application towards an issue where no reliable measures of its evaluation currently exist (Yin, 2002), especially in a situation where a holistic approach to research is desired and when an in-depth understanding of a specific population’s lived experiences is necessary (Gummesson, 1991).
The exploratory and, therefore, inductive nature of the study allowed me to learn about the participants’ experiences without explicit expectations (Schutt, 2004). As a result, this research provided a thorough investigation of a group of both current and former international F-1 students who were willing to share personal experiences about their socio-economic survival strategies while living and working in the United States in an F-1 status. This case study took on the idiographic approach (Windelband, 1894; Allport, 1937), as it collected data from a very specific subset of international students, a group that identified with having had worked in an F-1 status, therefore seeking ordinary common-sense or else innovative solutions for providing themselves the means to a life of dignity.

The study research design was shaped through an epistemological assumption about the social world being a complex phenomenon, where the problem of exclusion could only be researched through an emic approach. Inspired by the interpretivist philosophy (Lynch & Bogen, 1997; Schwandt, 1994; Williams, 2000), the research process relied on the belief that there was no objective reality. With billions of people in the world, each with unique experiences and views on social matters, searching for universally applicable social laws could distract me from learning how people understood their lives (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Hence, this relativist ontological perspective led me to believe that international students’ experiences could not be measured through an etic approach. This is exactly why the nature of my research was inductive.

Sample

The initial participant recruitment occurred among current and former international F-1 students within my personal network that I built throughout my career as an international student advisor, as well as through other life experiences where I encountered international
students. Study participation was open to all genders, races, ethnicities, nationalities, and affiliations. The age limit was 19 and over. Utilizing a method of snowball sampling, I then expanded my network and recruited more participants, with the total of 38 student participants interviewed in the end. The snowball sampling was done in a manner where participants could share my contact information with other people who might be interested, and who then contacted me directly. This way, the study participants’ privacy was respected as I only interviewed people who expressed an interest in sharing their lived experiences.

In addition, I sought out other stakeholders, such as international student advisors, designated school officials, and members of international student advocacy organizations, to interview for my study, as their contribution would provide me with an opportunity to learn about students’ experiences from an entirely different trajectory. Study participation was open to all genders, races, ethnicities, nationalities, and affiliations. The age limit was 19 and over. To recruit such stakeholders, I dug into my own network first and through those connections, ultimately identified more people to engage. In the end, I was able to recruit 22 stakeholder participants to share their experiences with international F-1 students and perceptions on the issues related to the central questions of the study. Selected through snowball-, informant- and network sampling, those stakeholders identified as someone who was directly involved with and exposed to international students’ experiences in a tight-knit capacity.

**Risk and benefits.** No more than minimal risk to all participants in this study was anticipated. It was also expected that the type of questions posed to the participants would not result in any unforeseen discomfort or emotional harm. Through the interview process, I learned that some of the study participants experienced socio-economic hardships as a
consequence of immigration policies. In cases where I felt the participants’ uneasiness in disclosing some of the information, I assured them of their right to stop talking or to exclude information at any time and for any reason.

Participants were also informed of the anticipated benefits of the study. I informed all study members that even though they would not directly benefit from participating in this study, their contributions would help researchers learn about the impact of immigration regulations on international F-1 students’ quality of life.

**Informed consent and confidentiality.** An oral consent was secured from all participants prior to conducting research activities. I ensured that participants understood the purpose of the study and what was asked of them during study participation, the potential harms and benefits, confidentiality procedures, and that their consent was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time without consequence. All notes produced during interviews were classified strictly by pseudonyms and contained no identifiable information that could link the study participants’ data to the real identities of the subjects.

**Site.** The decision to choose the New England region as the site for this study was based on my interest in investigating the issues of inclusion and exclusion within the area I reside in and am very familiar with. In addition, New England has long been considered a global hub for higher education as it attracts hundreds of thousands of international students due to its well-known schools, yet it is also one of the most expensive areas of the United States to live in.

**Methods**

The study utilized a multi-method approach as it applied several data-collection instruments to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the research, and to enhance the
processes of data collection and its ultimate analysis (Creswell, 2008; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The strength of combining several methods into one study was in the opportunity for an expansion of one’s understanding of the study’s phenomenon, not for the purposes of corroboration (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Quantitative data was obtained through questionnaires, which helped produce summaries with descriptive statistics that outlined the size and distribution of the study sample (Groves, 2009) through a set of established variables (Singleton & Straits, 2010). Qualitative data was collected exclusively through individual in-depth interviews with student participants, whereas in case of stakeholder participants, such data was obtained through a combination of in-person interviews as well as informal conversations that took place during professional networking events.

Interviewing method has been proven to be one of the strongest ones in qualitative research, as it combines the depth of understanding with analytic design to answer questions that are theoretically motivated (Lamont & Swidler, 2014). In-person interviews also give a researcher an opportunity to modify, add, or else abandon certain questions depending on participants’ stories or reactions (Glesne, 1999). In addition, interviews are a great way of collecting a variety of mental road maps from people to then establish patterns that lead back to the theoretical frameworks (Luker, 2010).

An extensive policy analysis was constructed through an evaluation of primary data resources, such as laws and statues, with the goal of the assessment of the restrictive nature of current regulations and understanding the governments’ rationalization for their specific formulation (Alexander, 2012; Hendrick, 1994; Quade, 1982; Vazquez & Delaplace, 2011; Wildavsky, 1979).
**Questionnaires.** During the initial stage of research, after the final sample had been established, I asked all study participant to supply their demographic information by responding to the questions outlined within a questionnaire that was put together in a format where responses could then be measured and juxtaposed. See the copy of the questionnaire presented to student participants in person in Appendix A, and the questionnaire for stakeholder participants that was presented to stakeholder participants either in person or online through the Google-Forms software in Appendix C.

**Interviews.** Questions most relevant to this qualitative study were open-ended and provided a platform for my study participants to speak freely about their unique experiences without being framed to think in a certain direction and towards a particular perspective.

Qualitative data related to student participants, was collected exclusively through one-on-one in-depth interviews, ranging from 30 minutes to five and a half hours in length. See the copy of the semi structured aide memoir that I referred to during the interviews with my student participants in Appendix B.

Qualitative data related to stakeholder participants was obtained through a combination of both in-person interviews as well as conversations that took place during informal group settings, such as professional conferences and other networking events. In cases where I did not get a chance to schedule and conduct one-on-one interviews with the stakeholders, I asked them to fill out a comprehensive online questionnaire of qualitative nature with open-ended questions on the topics that we had discussed. This was done to ensure data accuracy, as I did not have the capacity to take notes when I spoke with stakeholders in informal settings while networking. Scheduled one-on-one interviews with stakeholder participants ranged from two to three hours in length. Conversations that took
place during a variety of networking events lasted anywhere from 15 minutes to two and a half hours. The time it took those stakeholders to complete the open-ended questionnaire constructed via Google-Forms software, could not be determined, since some of the responses were very detailed and comprehensive, while others were brief and straight-to-the-point. See Appendix D for the copy of the semi structured aide memoir that I utilized in cases with my stakeholder participants.

The utilization of qualitative methods in this study was justified by my primary research objective to focus on individual experiences and explore their meaning, not on measuring quantifiable facts. Since qualitative methods are supported by interpretivist paradigm, while quantitative methods are based on the positivist and scientific research, which presumes that the studies phenomena can examined and measured, qualitative research methods were chosen to be a better fit. Qualitative research has been proven to be most effective in studies that revolve around the exploration of personal experiences that constitute many variables and also seek to answer open-ended questions, such as what and how (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2002).

**Policy Analysis.** Finally, the study utilized a policy analysis method to provide a comprehensive description of the immigration policies that address employment rights of international F-1 students in the United States, specifically articulated in 8 CFR § 214.2(f)(9) (2020). Policy analysis is a research technique used in a variety of academic fields; and models for its implementation vary depending on a disciplinary focus. Although there is no universal definition for policy analysis (Wildavsky, 1979), it is generally recognized as a form of research that helps policymakers carry out informed decisions (Downey, 1988; Gallagher, 1992; Quade, 1975; Walker, 2000; Williams, 1982).
Some characteristics of policy analysis include: being of an investigative, iterative nature (Alexander, 2012; Hendrick, 1994; Quade, 1982), focusing on a problem within its surrounding circumstances (Wildavsky, 1979), taking political and ethical contexts into consideration (Ball, 1993), and discussing alternative courses of action (Alexander, 2012; Colebatch, 1998). Ultimately, the main goal of analyzing a public policy is to assess and interrogate government actions to understand how the government itself rationalizes its laws (Vazquez & Delaplace, 2011).

The study employed a form of descriptive policy analysis that carefully examined the policy content and provided an empirical description of the existing regulations in terms of their objectives (Pal, 1987). Content analysis is a useful tool to assist policymakers in coming up with improved laws (Walker, 2000), but most importantly, it helps to clarify the problem, making it visible to the public. By providing an adequate interpretation of the policy’s complex language in terms that are accessible to the general public, I ultimately intended to build a more comprehensive picture of the current regulation’s exclusionary nature.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection, which not only helped me keep everything organized, but also shaped the study as it went on (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The goal was to find some possible explanations for participants’ experiences and behaviors. In order to analyze data in a meaningful way, I had to reduce it to something that I could manage (Luker, 2010), therefore, one of the first steps was to identify a number of patterns. To organize my research data, I ended up breaking it into a number of topics and themes that were recurrent or else stood out as anomalies. As I saw variations of
each or some of the themes, I then categorized them into sub-codes that were eventually analyzed further.

In order to interpret the data effectively, I utilized ethnomethodological, semiotic and deconstruction (Feldman, 1995) techniques of analysis. Through the ethnomethodological lens, I was able to identify the processes by which my study participants made sense of the social world, which in turn helped me understand their actions. Semiotic approach shed light on the meanings my research subjects assigned to the language of immigration policies, institutional regulations, social and cultural norms, and other relevant phenomena that played role in ways their lives formed. Deconstruction of the data produced from the interviews, took place in order to include what had not necessarily been said but could potentially be textualized (Feldman, 1995).

Due to a relatively large sample, which comprised of 60 study participants, the findings chapter produced a significant amount of details. Therefore, in order to provide clarity, the information was presented in multiple sub-sections according to each topic. In addition, comprehensive tables and figures were moved to Appendix in order to maintain a smooth flow of the narrative and eliminate a chance of the readers’ distraction from the context.

**Limitations.** The findings of the study cannot be generalized to fit all international students studying in the United States. However, generalizability was not of crucial importance for the purpose of this particular study. The strength of the data collection method was in its depth and exposure to the lives of individuals whose unique experiences had the potential to shed light on some of the bigger social problems that had yet to be tied to international F-1 students.
Positionality

As someone with a personal background of a former international student in the United States, I understood that I could not rely on remaining completely unbiased at all times during the analysis of the empirical data. However, the insider perspective also positioned me well to understand the landscape of international students in the United States and provided me with an indisputably valuable ability to build trust with informants.

In addition, my acquaintance with some of the study participants had the potential to influence the nature of knowledge produced. With a clear understanding of the fact that my study participants’ experiences were different from my own, however, I continuously reflected on my own positionality and ensured that ethical and methodological considerations were being reassessed on the regular basis (Miller and Bell, 2002). Regardless of how often one reevaluates the dynamics of the ongoing investigation, it is still generally difficult to fully claim an unequivocal objectivity for the analysis. Yet, objectivity in academic research is only an illusion (Mnisi Weeks, 2015), therefore making a sincere effort to detach myself from the process of data collection and analysis as much as possible, was a fair solution to the dilemma.

As a person who shared multiple life experiences in common with the study participants, I held both insider and outsider status. Therefore, my goal was to approach the study as an outsider, a researcher who was looking into the lives of participants from a distance. A full acknowledgement of the fact that I would never be able to fully forgo a set of assumptions already formed by me on the subject matter, as well as a continuous self-reflection, were the two necessary practices that helped me throughout the research process. Nevertheless, the fact that I was also able to empathize with the study participants from the
point of view of an insider who was capable of understanding their feelings, presented a unique opportunity for me to establish a trustworthy relationship that, in my genuine opinion, increased credibility of the produced data (Miller and Wallis, 2011).
CHAPTER 4
THE LAND OF THE FREE UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS

Utilizing a method of snowball sampling, I was able to recruit 38 participants who identified as either current international F-1 student or former F-1 student now residing in the United States in a different immigration status, and who were either currently attending or otherwise had attended a school located in New England. I did not interview any former international students who had moved back to their home countries. All student participants held at least one job while they were in F-1 status and therefore could share their work-related experiences with me. None of the respondents’ names hereby utilized are real for the purpose of preserving their privacy. Names of the institutions attended by the participants and names of their employers are disguised for the same reason.

The entire data collection process took place during the period of six consecutive months, from April 2019 to September 2019. Since none of the information obtained from the study participants was recorded in a manner where identity of the human subjects could be readily ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, per 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2), this study was granted an exempt status by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Massachusetts Boston on March 28th, 2019.

Demographic data collected from the study sample was of quantitative nature and was measured and analyzed through summaries, percentages, graphs, charts, tables, measures of central tendency and spread, as well as statistical commentary. Qualitative data related to
student participants, was collected exclusively through one-on-one in-depth interviews, ranging from 30 minutes to five and a half hours in length.

Empirical findings presented in this chapter shed light on the following themes uncovered during the qualitative data collection process: F-1 Students’ Motivations Behind the Decision to Come to the United States; F-1 Students’ Biggest Challenges; Pre-Departure Expectations and Reality; Earning While Learning: Experiences of F-1 Students at Work; Employment-Related Immigration Policies: Voices of F-1 Students, and finally, Immigration Policies’ Impact on F-1 Students’ Socio-Economic Well-Being. Multiple sub-themes were identified throughout the findings’ analysis of each topic, which were summarized in both narrative and visual formats, such as charts and tables.

**Demographic Data and Descriptive Statistics**

I asked all 38 student participants the same demographic-data-related questions before conducting my interviews with them. There were 18 questions of this nature, and all 38 individuals responded to them. Presented below is the quantitative data analysis put together on the basis of the student participants’ demographic variables along with the elements of descriptive statistics. The section is hereby organized in the following order: Country of origin; Current immigration status; Entry visa; Gender; Current age; Age at the time of entry; Years spent in the United States; Marital status; Citizenship; Race; Ethnicity; Family’s socio-economic status; Religion; Highest academic degree achieved at the moment; Academic program type; School type; Field of study, and Current employment status.

**Country of origin.** Thirty-eight student participants originated from 27 different countries, representing almost all of the world’s geographic regions, with an exception of Oceania. Thus, there was considerable heterogeneity within world regions of the student
sample. Sixteen percent of the respondents were from Africa; 37% – from Asia; 16% – from Europe; 13% were from Eurasia (transcontinental); 16% – from South America, and 2.63% – from North America.

See Figure 3 in Appendix F for the summary of student participants’ geographic regions of origin represented in a pie chart format for a better visual. In addition, see Table E.1 in Appendix E for a more comprehensive summary that includes student participants’ specific countries of origin within the scope of the world’s geographic regions, including exact numbers and percentages.

**Current immigration status.** The student sample represented both current international students on an F-1 visa as well as former F-1 status holders who were now residing in the United States under a different immigration status.

Thirty-two percent identified as currently being in an F-1 status, while the rest of the student sample (68%), was dominated by former F-1 students. Out of those 68% non-F-1 respondents, 13% were currently on an H-1B temporary work visa, 29% were permanent residents/green card holders, and 26% were now U.S. citizens.

See Figure 4 in Appendix F with the summary of student participants’ current immigration status represented in a bar chart format for a better visual. In addition, see Table E.2 in Appendix E for more detailed information on current F-1 students juxtaposed with the following variables in application to that population: entry visa, current employment status, academic degree program, and years in the United States. Same data is available in Table E.3 on former-F-1 students-now H-1B workers; Table E.4 on former-F-1 students-now-U.S. permanent residents, and Table E. 5 with on former-F-1-students-now U.S. citizens, all located in Appendix E.
Entry visa. The vast majority of student participants (76%) initially came to the
United States on an F-1 visa. The rest of the respondents (24%) originally entered the country
on a different visa and subsequently applied for a change of their nonimmigrant status to an
F-1. Out of seven respondents who ended up changing their status to F-1, 15% came on a J-1
cultural and educational exchange visa, 5.3% – on a B1/B2 visitor visa, and 2.6% – on an H-
4 visa, the type of nonimmigrant visa issued to immediate family members of the H-1B visa
holders.

Seventy-six percent of the student participants who had entered the United States on
an F-1 visa, now had the following immigration status: 32% were still in an F-1 status, 13%
were now temporary workers on an H-1B visa, 13% were now permanent residents/green
card holders, and 24% were now U.S. citizens. Twenty-four percent of the non-F-1-entrants
now had the following immigration status: 30% were permanent residents and 9% – U.S.
citizens. See Table E.6 in Appendix E as well as Figure 5 in Appendix F for a comparison of
student participants’ entry visa to their current immigration status along with the numbers
and percentages.

Gender. Fifty percent of the study participants identified as female. Equally, 50%
identified as male. The even gender divide of the sample was completely coincidental.

Women-respondents were from 15 different countries, representing six geographic
regions. See Table E.7 in Appendix E for a comparison of the various countries of birth of
women-participants according to the world’s geographic regions along with the numbers and
percentages. Male respondents originated from 12 different countries, representing five
geographic regions. See Table E.8 in Appendix E for a comparison of the various countries
of birth of male participants according to the world’s geographic regions along with the numbers and percentages.

Overall, there was a fairly equal representation of both female and male student participants from identified geographic regions of the world, with representation of male-participants being slightly higher than female respondents from Asia and Africa and representation of female participants being slightly higher than male respondents from South America and Eurasia. Europe was represented equally, and North America was only represented by one female.

**Current age.** The average age of 38 student participants was 32. The mean value appeared to be 31. The mode of ‘31 years old’ had the highest representation Age data range was calculated to be 30.

**Age at the time of entry.** All participants were asked about their age at the time of entry into the United States, regardless of the entry visa type yet specific to the time when they actually ended up residing in the country as F-1 students. Having an understanding that residing in the United States under an F-1 status and having entered on such status with an F-1 visa in a passport, are two different things, I wanted to make sure that my study participants understood what I was asking for. Also, taking into consideration a possible factor that participants might have entered the country in the past with a different visa for the first time, I wanted to accentuate that I was particularly interested in the age of entry when they actually ended up residing in the United States in an F-1 status.

Findings produced the following numbers: the average age at which respondents entered the United States when they ended up residing here in an F-1 status, was 23, quite a
gap when compared to the mean age of the respondents, which was 32. The youngest age of entry identified was 14, and the oldest – 42, producing the range number of 28.

Thirty percent of the student respondents came to the United States in their teens; over 60% – had entered the country in their 20’s; 8% – in their 30’s, and 3% – in their 40’s.

**Years in the United States.** The vast majority (84.2%) of the respondents identified that they had already lived in the United States for more than five years. Only one (2.6%) participant said that they lived here for over a year, and 13.2% – for about three or four years.

The mean value of the sample’s length of residency in the United States was nine. Similarly, the median and mode values were calculated to be nine as well. Finally, the data set range amounted to 16. See Table E.9 in Appendix E for the summary of the number of years spent in the United States with a comparison of student participants’ age of entry to their current age, entry visa type, and current immigration status.

**Marital status.** Fifty percent of the respondents were married, 37% identified as single (never married), and 13% were divorced.

The majority of the student participants who were married were either permanent residents or U.S. citizens, making up the majority (79%) of the married population who were now officially migrants. A quite different picture was hereby drawn by single (never married) respondents, majority of whom (79%) were currently residing in a nonimmigrant status in the United States. The last but not least, marital status group of divorcees was almost equally represented, with two women currently holding an F-1 status and the rest three now having gained their U.S. citizenship status.
See Table E.10 in Appendix E for an organized visual of statistically valuable information correlated to the respondents’ marital status, organized by marriage status, entry visa, current immigration status, gender, and geographic region.

**Citizenship.** Out of 38 respondents, 21% had a dual citizenship, of whom 18% were both U.S. citizens and citizens of their country of origin, and one (2%) was a citizen of two countries other than the United States. The rest of the respondents (79%) had only one citizenship: 8% now only held U.S. citizenship and no longer were citizens of their country of origin, whereas 71% held a citizenship of their country of origin.

**Race.** When asking a question about race, I elaborated to the study participants that the researcher (self) understood that race was a social construct, and that that question in particular, referred to the biological/physical appearance. I would give examples, saying that one may say that their race was white, black, Latino (white), Latino (black), Latino (mixed race), Asian, two or more races, other, and I would also give the respondents an opportunity to elaborate. I did not have preset categories, therefore, all the answers provided hereby are formulated by the respondents themselves, despite their possible inaccuracy with regard to the formal definitions of the Census Bureau or any other entities.

In order to create a more organized summary and for the purpose of proper analysis of the variable, I grouped the respondents’ answers into the following categories: White, White Latino, White – Other, Mixed Race Latino, Latino – Unidentified, Asian, Black, Two or More Races, and Other. Ultimately, the sample was narrowed down to 29% white students, 24% Asian students, 13% black, 11% – other, 8% white Latino students, 5% white – other, 5% Latino unidentified, 2.5% mixed race Latino, and 2.5% students of 2 or more races. See Figure 6 in Appendix F for the visual summary of the student participants’ race
variable spread. In addition, see Table E.11 in Appendix E for the final count of student respondents by race categorized by the researcher (self) compared with the original data provided by the respondents, including their country of origin.

**Ethnicity.** When asking my study participants about their ethnicity, I made sure to explain that ethnicity was a term for the culture of people in a given geographic region, including their language, heritage, religion and customs. I would suggest some examples, such as “I'm Russian and Udmurt. My husband is Colombian, even though he was born in the United States. My friend is French and Irish, even though she was born in Australia and is now a U.S. citizen.” I did not have preset categories, therefore, all the answers provided hereby are formulated by the respondents themselves, despite of their possible inaccuracy in regard to the formal definitions of the Census Bureau or any other entities.

Fifty-five percent identified their ethnicity as identical to their country of origin. For example, an Italian from Italy. Whereas 45% had more elaborate answers. See Table E.12 in Appendix E for a comparison of ethnicity, race and country of origin for the seventeen participants who identified their ethnicity as something different than simply their country of origin, which was the case with the rest of the participants.

**Family’s socio-economic status.** Family’s socio-economic background is one of the major predictors of children’s academic and career outcomes (Coleman, 1988; Hill, 2011) as well as their psychological well-being (DeCarlo Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2011; Spencer, Kohn, & Woods, 2002). In addition, social and economic factors are often tied to one’s motivation to immigrate to the United States (Hatton and Williamson, 2008; Moses, 2006; Shackelford, 2010). Therefore, it was essential for me to inquire about student
participants’ socio-economic backgrounds due to a possible correlation of that variable to their current feeling of inclusion and socio-economic well-being.

Ultimately, 18.4% categorized their family’s socio-economic status at the time when they had come to the United States as working class; 23.7% came from lower middle class, 2.6% were in-between upper middle and lower middle class, 50% came from upper middle class, and 5.3% said that their families were upper class. See Table E.13 in Appendix E to compare how international students’ families’ socio-economic background aligned with the following variables: highest academic degree achieved at the moment, country of origin, entry visa, current immigration status, and current employment status.

Religion. Fifty-five percent of the respondents were Christian, 18.5% were Atheists or Non-Religious, 8% were Agnostic, 11% – Muslim, 5% – Hindu, and 2.5% – Skeptic. See Table E.14 in Appendix E for a comparison of student participants’ religious beliefs with their country of origin, socio-economic status, and highest degree achieved variables.

Highest academic degree achieved at the moment. At the time of the interview, over 60% of the respondents already had at least a master’s degree, with 34.3% having had completed one master’s degree program, 23.7% having had completed two or more master’s, and 2.6% having had completed a doctorate degree; 31.6% had a bachelor’s; 2.6% had an associate’s; 2.6% had a non-degree certificate, and 2.6% had a high school diploma.

The Highest Degree Achieved variable is different from the Program Type variable, which is discussed below. It is important to stress the distinction, as the two variables carry their own, individual properties. For example, one participant who had a doctorate at the moment of the interview, had obtained it in their home country prior to their arrival to the
United States with the goal of pursuing an MBA. Another example would be someone with a master’s degree pursuing an associate degree in the United States while on an F-1 visa.

Program type. The Program Type variable related to the respondents’ degree program they were pursuing while being in an F-1 status. Findings showed that 34.2% were enrolled in an undergraduate degree program, 50% pursued a graduate degree, 13.2% identified that they pursued a Master’s degree after having completed an undergraduate degree program in the United States, and 2.6% were enrolled in a non-degree certificate program while they were in an F-1 status.

Two participants who pursued an associate’s degree in the United States already had a higher level degree from their home country at the time they began their studies: one had a bachelor’s degree, and one had a master’s. Similarly, one participant who pursued a master’s degree in the United States already had a doctorate degree from their home country at the time they applied for an F-1 visa. There were also four respondents who originally came to the United States to pursue a bachelor’s degree, yet then persevered to go to graduate school. Similarly, there were four respondents who originally aimed for a master’s degree and ended up going for their doctorate after completion. See Table E.15 in Appendix E for a comparison of student participants’ program type undertaken while in F-1 status to their highest academic degree achieved at the moment of the interview, including numbers and percentages.

School type. Fifty percent of the respondents stated that they attended a public school (or schools in case where the study participants went to more than one institution while in an F-1 status), while 34% attended a private institution (or institutions in case where they
attended more than one school). Sixteen percent of the respondents stated that they went to both public and private schools during their F-1 journey.

Out of the 50% who went to public schools, 21% pursued a graduate degree(s), 24% – an undergraduate degree, and 5% were enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate degree programs at public schools. See Table E.16 in Appendix E for a comparison of student participants’ school types to their academic program type, including numbers and percentages.

**Field of study.** Student participants were studying a wide variety of subjects, yet all of them could be narrowed down to and summarized under the three main umbrellas: Business, STEM, and Humanities. The field of study represented by the largest group of the student participant sample was Business, where 55.3% of the respondents focused their studies on a business-related subject. STEM field was represented by 18.4% of the respondents. Finally, the field of Humanities was represented by 26.3% of the study participants. See Figure 8 in Appendix F for the summary of the students’ fields of study presented in a pie chart format for a better visual. In addition, see Table E.17 in Appendix E for a more comprehensive summary that includes student participants’ self-identified majors.

**Current employment status.** Majority of the student respondents (82%) were employed at the time when the interviews were conducted: 63% were employed full-time, while 18% held part-time jobs. Eighteen percent of the student participants were unemployed, however had held a job in the past in an F-1 status. See Table E.18 in Appendix E for a more comprehensive summary of student participants’ current employment status with a juxtaposition to their families’ socio-economic background, highest academic degree achieved, country of origin, entry visa, and current immigration status.
**Quantitative data analysis summary.** I interviewed 38 international F-1 students (current or former) now residing in the United States, who had an experience of being employed while attending a school in the New England area in an F-1 status. Thirty eight student participants originated from 27 countries, representing six geographic regions. 32% of the respondents were currently in an F-1 status, while 68% were former F-1 students now residing in the United States under a different immigration status. Eighty-two percent of the study participants had entered the country on an F-1 visa, while 18% used a different nonimmigrant visa at the point of entry.

Fifty percent of the sample were female, and 50% were male. The average age of the respondents was 32, while the average age at their time of entry was 23, with the mean value of the sample’s length of residency in the United States being nine years. Fifty percent of the sample were married, 37% were single, and 13% were divorced. Most study participants (79%) only had one citizenship, while 21% were dual citizens. Forty-two percent of the respondents were white, 24% were Asian, 13% were black, 5% were of two or more races, and 16% identified as Other. Fifty-five percent of participants reported their ethnicity as being identical to their country of origin, while 45% had more elaborate answers.

Over 60% of the study participants had at least one master’s degree, 32% had a bachelor’s degree, 2.6% had an associate’s, 2.6% had a non-degree certificate, and 2.6% had a high school diploma at the time of the interview. While in F-1 status, 34.2% of the respondents were enrolled in an undergraduate degree program, 50% pursued a graduate degree, 13.2% identified that they pursued a master’s degree after having had completed an undergraduate degree program in the United States, and 2.6% were enrolled in a non-degree certificate program. Fifty percent of the student participants attended public schools, 34%
went to private institutions, while 16% went to both public and private schools during their F-1 journey. Fifty-five percent studied business, 26% studied humanities, and 18% pursued STEM degrees. Finally, 82% were currently employed, and 18% – unemployed, yet had held jobs in the past while in an F-1 status.

See Table E.19 in Appendix E for a comprehensive demographic summary of the student participant sample with pseudonyms sorted in alphabetical order and aligned with their demographic data in the following order: country of origin, current immigration status, entry visa, gender, current age, age at the time of entry, years spent in the United States, marital status, citizenship, race, ethnicity, religion, family’s socio-economic status, highest academic degree achieved, program type, school type, field of study, and current employment status. Table E.19 is also followed by a descriptive list with the same data to assist the reader with abbreviations utilized within the table, and as an alternative presentation style of the summary.

F-1 Students’ Motivations for Coming to the United States

_There is no other country like America .... It has the best education ... and quality of life. Having grown up with American pop-culture, by tenth grade I was already Westernized. I grew up with the Internet, and I wanted to see what it was like in reality .... I had to force myself to become strong to get out of India. I didn’t want to be nothing. If you are [in India], you are nothing! So, I wanted to be something. I had to develop because if you don’t improve yourself every day and learn new things ... why live? Why even exist if you can’t improve your life?_

(Jaden, F-1 Student from India)

One of the central interview questions posed to student participants during the process of learning about their lived experiences, focused on their motivations for pursuing their education in the United States. From our discussions about their backgrounds, I learned a lot about the driving factors that had landed my student participants in the United States in the
first place. I am hereby often utilizing the term ‘F-1 status’ versus ‘F-1 visa’ for a reason, as those terms are not interchangeable in particular cases. Twenty-four percent of the student respondents did not enter the United States on an F-1 visa: six individuals entered the country on a J-1 visa, two came on a B1/B2 visa, and one – on an H-4 visa; nine of them altogether having had ultimately adjusted their nonimmigrant status to F-1 while in the United States. Therefore, it is essential to make this distinction in order to provide an accurate analysis of the data.

**Non – F-1 entrants.** From the responses of the 24% of student participants who had initially entered the country in a different nonimmigrant status, it was clear that pursuing a degree was not their primary goal. For example, Bianca, former F-1 student from Honduras, who had entered the country on a B1/B2 visa, “decided to move to the USA because most of [her] family live[d] here.” Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, who had also originally entered the country on a B1/B2 visa, on the contrary, “never wanted to move to America,” but her boyfriend, who was from Ukraine and did not have a U.S. citizenship, wanted to live in the United States, so she “followed him.” Similarly, Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, who had entered the country on a J-1 Work and Travel visa, also came to reunite with “the love of [her] life.” For Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, who had entered the United States on a J-1 Au Pair visa, “the main driver was money.”

Kruz, former F-1 student from Czech Republic, Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, and Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, who had all initially entered the United States on a J-1 Au Pair visa, simply wanted to learn English, experience the U.S. culture and have an adventure. Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, who had originally entered the country on a J-1 Work and Travel visa, stated that it was “easier to get a J-1 visa
and to [then] stay in the United States.” Finally, Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, who had entered the United States on an H-4 visa almost two decades ago, was only 14 years old at the time and was a dependent of his H-1B-temporary-work-visa-holder-father. All those individuals (six J-1’s, two B1/B2’s, and one H-4) ended up adjusting their nonimmigrant status to F-1 in order to remain in legal status; and being able to get education was, admittedly, an extra bonus.

**F-1 entrants.** Seventy-six percent of the student participants had initially entered the United States on an F-1 visa. Yet again, education was not necessarily the main reason why they had decided to come to the United States. In fact, only a few student participants stated that their primary motivation for coming to the United States was education, like Morris, an F-1 student from Morocco, who said the following: “U.S. has been known for its high level of education. American colleges have a great reputation all over the world.” Or Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, who went to an “American university” in her home country and had always seen herself going to the United States to continue her education: “Growing up, I only knew about U.S. schools.” Or James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, who thought that “the U.S. degree was more marketable” and stated that “jobs in Bolivia w[ould] hire you on the spot with a U.S. degree.” Yet, even James mentioned during his interview that he had ultimately chosen the United States over other countries because he already had his family here. The same exact situation with Olivia, who also emphasized the fact that she already had her brother living in the United States at the time she was applying for schools.

**Influencing factors driving student participants’ decisions to study in the United States.** A combination of pull, push, and other miscellaneous external factors played a role in
student participants’ decisions to become F-1 students. I hereby present a breakdown of some of the more common categories: U.S. tie; socio-economic and political factors; personal/identity-related motivations; parents’ idea; friends’ influence; media influence, and random external factors.

**U.S. tie.** Many student participants had a relative, a good friend, a loved one, or a mentor who had already lived in the United States at the time of making their decision to apply for an F-1 visa, which in some cases boosted their confidence in coming to the United States. For example, Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova, said that she wanted to come to the United States “because [she] had a friend there already” who she had gone to a “Jewish school together in Moldova” and “also wanted to stay in the U.S.” “Well, I was young back then,” she admitted, “so, I was hoping to find new friends and a boyfriend.” Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, shared that she simply followed her “husband [who] was already [in the United States] going to school, so [she] came with him.” Similarly, Zayden, former F-1 student from Burkina Faso, explained his motivation by admitting that he wanted to “reunite with [his] girlfriend who was already living [in the United States].” Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, shared that the reason she had come to the United States was because “[her] father [was] a U.S. citizen …, and he was supposed to sponsor [her] for a green card”:

*But he wanted to look at me first …. When he saw me, I reminded him too much of his ex-wife who he hated, and he started resenting me and screwed me over. He wanted me to go back, but I stayed.*

**Socio-economic and political factors.** Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, admitted that for him, the main reason to come to the United States was to “work in the U.S. and send money home.” “Historically, you have to go away and send remittances back home,” said Nathan. In the same vein, Upton, former F-1 student from Turkey, echoed
Nathan by identifying “better economic opportunities” being his primary motivation for coming to the United States. Peter, former F-1 student from India, gave a partly similar explanation for his decision to leave his country: “I knew I just wanted to leave India and have a better economic opportunity in the U.S. I knew I could make better money here.”

Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, emphasized that his decision to come to the United States was “not [his] personal,” and had resulted from “the political situation and economic crisis in Venezuela.” He explained that “in Venezuela, studying abroad wasn’t popular” and “if not for the crisis, [he]’d never leave.” “I was one of the first people to leave the country to the U.S.,” Santiago added. Economic situation in her home country also forced Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, out:

*I had a really good job, but I still couldn’t even afford rent. I had to ask my parents to help me with rent. I had a master’s degree from the UK, I had a good job, but I felt so ashamed and frustrated. I just didn’t want to live in this country anymore. I loved my country, but it was so backwards. I just wanted to leave. That really played a role .... No earnings, I was frustrated. This pushed me out. Oh my God, I’m leaving. I can’t spend my prime years in this country.*

Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan, also focused more on the push, rather than pull influencing factors that had inspired her decision:

*I just wanted to get da hell out of my country. We were middle class, but I knew my mom was going to get old one day, and I would have to take care of her, and how would I be able to do that with no opportunities in my country?*

**Personal/identity-related motivations.** Several students shared with me that their decision to come to the United States was two-folded. On the one hand, they really wanted to study abroad and get a U.S. education, on the other hand, they had their personal or identity-related motivations. For example, Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, mentioned that one of the reasons he wanted to come to the United States was because “[he] s[aw] [him]self as an ethnic minority in [his] country, but in the United States, [he] c[ould] blend in: “I didn’t
believe in the American Dream, didn’t want to be rich, just wanted to find myself,” admitted Caleb. Similarly, Derek, former F-1 student from China, shared that being gay and living a closeted life in his home country was something that reinforced his decision to come to the United States. “I was gay, and no one knew about it,” said Derek, who was now living as an openly gay man in the United States and felt happy and safe. Another study participant also admitted that his identity played a role in his decision: “Kazakhstan is starting to lose Russian, and everything is turning into the Kasack majority. So, if you want to get a job, you have to speak fluent Kazakh. I don’t speak it, and we become marginalized” (Jack, F-1 student from Kazakhstan with a Russian ethnolinguistic background).

Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, and Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, both admitted that aside from their aspiration to pursue a U.S. degree, their recent divorce had definitely given them an extra push in their decisions: “Divorce … pushed me to leave the continent to begin with. Plus, I got a scholarship, so it’s an opportunity that I couldn’t resist,” said Rachael. In a similar fashion, Alexandra stated the following: “I wanted to leave my country because of my divorce. And I just wanted to get out …. Plus, the funding was good, and I took the risk.” Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, who was also divorced, confessed that she “was bullied in school for being short, and then during college, also didn’t get any interest from guys” in her home country, but the first time she came to the United States, she “started getting so many compliments!” “I felt pretty here,” said Charlize. So, for her, that was another reason for coming to the United States.

Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, mentioned that she “got labeled as sick [due to her eating disorders]” in her home country community, and she “didn’t want to carry that label anymore … and wanted to start over,” that becoming an additional reason for her to
move to the United States. Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, also wanted to start over and change her lifestyle. She said that she was “really spoiled” in Iran. Mirah had her own business, worked for a good company, and her parents had a lot of money, but she “felt like a big fish in a small pond” and felt like she did not “own her life.” And Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan, shared that a troubling situation in her family served as one of the drivers to leave her country for the United States:

*My father was abusive. He beat my mother, and I didn’t want to stay in Uzbekistan and end up with an abusive husband and not work, so I was like, I need to get out of here. I was so sick of all that drama my parents had; it was ... a way to escape for me.*

**Parents’ idea.** Many student participants I interviewed, did not want to study in the United States to begin with, having shared a number of exterior influencing factors ultimately resulting in their pursuit of an F-1 status. In fact, 37% of the respondents said that it was their parents’ idea.

*I never wanted to study abroad, but my parents wanted me to do it. My parents became very rich one day, and then they decided to send me to the U.S. My father had experience in the U.S. as an exchange historic scientist. He loves America very much. He wants to move here. So, they sent me here to become a citizen one day and bring them here. Plus, my uncle lives here and could support me.*

(Zack, F-1 student from Kazakhstan)

Derek, former F-1 student from China, shared that “when [he] was in high school, [his] dad was like, ‘do you want to take SAT?’... so the primary reason was [his] dad.” Derek explained: “If you can afford it financially, you send your kid abroad. If you trust your kids to live abroad. They [parents] think it’s a better education. It means better job, income or status. Doesn’t matter you stay or not.” Similarly, Ash, former F-1 student from India, was also influenced by his parents: “My parents pushed me. They used to work abroad, and they
knew about USA being a good economic opportunity. I spent my entire life in boarding
schools. My mom wanted me to pursue an American education.”

The same thing happened to Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia: “My father
was the one who pushed me a lot. He wanted me to have a different perspective …. Initially,
I wanted to go to college in Colombia, but my father wanted me to go abroad.” Kalvin, an F-
1 student from Indonesia, also said that it was his parents’ decision to send him to the United
States:

*I personally thought about going abroad, but maybe not so far as the U.S. ..., but my
mom came to the U.S. to study accounting and then went back to Indonesia ..., and
my father wanted me to go to a good school ... to make connections ... so that when I
come back, I have ... business contacts.*

**Friends’ influence.** Twenty-one percent of student participants noted that it was their
friend(s) who had planted the idea of coming to the United States into their brain.

*My friend shared their experience with me studying for a master’s degree [in the
United States] and having gotten a scholarship. My job was awful, and I wanted to
develop. So, I started searching for schools in the U.S. Found a school that I really
liked, I applied for it, fingers crossed. In the UK I couldn’t get scholarship. I would
have never known about the U.S. though until I spoke with my friend.*
(Meaghan, F-1 student from Nigeria)

Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, shared that “[he] got into study abroad through a
friend…, [who] did the same program at [X-University] in the U.S., and … was happy with
the program.” Richard elaborated: “We did a master’s together in Italy. He introduced me to
the faculty at [X-University]. I didn’t really think about MBA, but it was a good opportunity.
I got a full scholarship.” Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, also learned about the
opportunity to obtain a degree in the United States from her friends: “My friends told me you
could get a GA-ship and study for free, so I figured, my friends did it, then I just followed.”
The same thing happened to Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia: “I never planned to do it [study in the United States]. I already had a family, two kids, I was settled down. But then my friend went to study at [X-University] in America, and then she was like, ‘you should come too. It’s an easier process that you think’ …. I needed to master my English … for my job …, so, I applied to [X-University] because of my friend and didn’t know any other schools.”

**Media influence.** Some respondents emphasized the influence of media having had played a major role in the process of the formation of their ultimate decision to come to the United States. “The American culture was something that I was drawn to through media. There is a lot of talk about it, it gets into your brain, so you think, you have to go there,” noted Daniel, an F-1 student from Indonesia. “I watched a movie ‘Homeless to Harvard’, and it inspired me,” echoed Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia. “America had that big image. It was huge. I wanted specifically go to the U.S. to pursue better opportunities for myself,” admitted Peter, former F-1 student from India.

*USA is loud, it’s on the media. You learn about it through music, shows …, U.S. has this imaginary power. America is like going to Heaven …, African families sell houses in their countries so that kids come here to study.*
(Nathan, F-1 student from Burkina Faso)

**Random external influence factors.** Some student respondents shared that their decision to study in the United States emerged from random external sources. For example, Maya, former F-1 student from Russia, never planned to study abroad: “I already worked as a Dean at my school and had a PhD in Economics …, then one day I was reached out by the admissions office of [X-University] in the U.S. inviting me to apply for an MBA program for advanced professionals with a full scholarship ….. I was having troubles with my boyfriend at that time, so I figured why not.” Unlike Maya, Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam, did
Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, explained his motivation for coming to the United States as an F-1 student by stating the following: “I like to travel, so I wanted to go away …. My uncle studied at [X-University in X-City in New England], so he contacted his DSO who was still there, and she created an I-20 for me. I didn’t look for schools. I wanted to get away from my home.” In addition, some of the student participants mentioned such influencing factors as having received a scholarship at their school, having found a U.S. citizen to sponsor their studies in the United States, or a simple desire to learn English, travel, and experience the U.S. culture.

See Table E.20 in Appendix E for a comparison of student participants’ pull and push factors that had contributed to their decision of pursuing an F-1 status in the United States. In addition, see Table E.21 in Appendix E for the summary of the external influencing factors leading to student participants’ acquisition of their F-1 status.

**Biggest Challenges Experienced by F-1 Students**

Most student respondents listed several factors that had been troubling to them during their experiences, and many of those elements were intersecting. However, in order to operationalize the multifaceted nature of student participants’ responses about their experienced challenges, I selected the issues that were identified by the respondents before all else. The breakdown of the study sample’s very first comments yielded the following results: 50% of the student respondents identified work-related or financial issues as being
the biggest challenges they had experienced during their F-1 journeys; 26.5% considered language and cultural barriers being the toughest ones to overcome; 10.5% thought that the most frustrating part about being an F-1 student was the lack of pathways towards permanent residency in the United States. For eight percent, the most difficult element was homesickness and loneliness, and five percent of the respondents found it really hard to navigate the U.S. system of education.

See Table 1 below for an overview of the student participants’ initial responses about their otherwise manifold challenges.

Table 1
Student Participants: Biggest Challenges of Being an F-1 Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Financial/Work-Related</th>
<th>Language/Cultural</th>
<th>Lack of Pathways Towards Residency</th>
<th>Homesickness/Loneliness</th>
<th>U.S. Education System</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Number</td>
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<td>26.5%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Financial and work-related challenges.** Financial challenges were by far the most common ones mentioned by the student respondents. Related key terms included: lack of financial stability, lack of economic stability, not having enough money, not being able to afford anything, financial struggles, extremely expensive tuition, everything being very expensive comparing to home country, having to continuously look for extra money, finding it very expensive to keep the status, having no money, being really poor, finding it hard to afford living, among others.

Most of the student participants blamed the U.S. immigration system that restricted their right to work for having had caused their continuous financial insecurity: “We don’t
have the freedom to work like other residents. So, your rights are limited,” shared Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania. “And I have a lot of bills …, plus I have a son to raise,” she continued. “Having a child makes things more complicated. Especially in [X-City in New England], rent is so high,” Bina added. “You can’t work …, they don’t allow you to work,” echoed Derek, former F-1 student from China.

Similarly, Jaden, an F-1 student from India, said that “not having the liberty to do what Americans [could], like getting a job,” was international students’ biggest challenge. “I [my family] had to finance all my living, but Americans could work,” stated Jaden. “If I didn’t have the restrictions, I could have been in a better position,” he added. “America is … the land of the free, but under certain conditions,” concluded Jaden. Employment restrictions were also frustrating to Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine: “Give me a permission to work …, and my life would be easier. It was really difficult.” “The fact that they don’t allow you to work, and you have to spend so much money on school is ridiculous,” echoed Peter, former F-1 student from India.

In cases where U.S. immigration policies allowed employment for F-1 students, however, like on-campus or for academic credit, experiences shared with me by the student participants were still mostly negative: “I had a graduate assistantship …, but the money’s not enough. I had to substitute a lot with my savings cause in summer I didn’t have assistantship,” stated Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany. Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, who also had an assistantship, shared a similar frustration: “The assistantship was not enough.” “When something happens, and you have to go to the hospital, you are gonna struggle financially,” he added. “If you work off campus, it’s illegal and you get deported,” said Caleb in conclusion.
In contrast, Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, did not have an assistantship, so she had to work on campus to support herself and her family:

*I worked two different dining jobs on campus: cashier and a sandwich maker…. I’d come home at 1 am and wake up at 5 am to go to work, all between classes. I was only making $160 a week …, we had to survive on that. That was food and rent money. I didn’t even know they didn’t provide lunch money for middle school. My son came home, and he said ‘I’m hungry, you have to pay for lunches’…. So, I worked on campus …, and I couldn’t succeed in classes. I went to the dean of my school, and I asked if it was ok to quit school. I was giving up.*

For some students it was difficult to find any kind of legal employment to begin with:

“It was difficult to find a job. You get rejections simply on the basis of being an international student,” said Ash, former F-1 student from India, who found it nearly impossible to get an internship as an F-1 student. Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, had a very similar experience:

*It’s so unfair. Even my smartest friends can’t get a job …. The locals only help locals …. I interviewed for so many companies, and all of them asked me about my future plans. Why train a new employee if they’re gonna leave in a year anyways? It’s just unfair.*

Finding an internship was also a very long struggle for Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam and Upton, former F-1 student from Turkey. And for Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, the CPT job that he had ended up undertaking, was “not what [he] wanted to do. It was a step back.”

**Language and cultural barriers.** Language and cultural barriers were the second most commonly mentioned challenges experienced by the respondents. Student participants utilized such key terms as lack of English knowledge, accent, difficulty to communicate, adjusting to lifestyle, culture thing, cultural differences, inability to connect with Americans, and assimilation problems.
For some students, it was just the language: “It was difficult to communicate … because of the language barrier,” shared Bianca, former F-1 student from Honduras.

“Language is the most difficult,” echoed Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan. And Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, specified that for him, “it was the accent the first couple of years” because “people weren’t patient with trying to explain to [him] things that [he] didn’t understand,” Ian added that “encounters with Americans were awkward at first, but you [eventually] get over the language barrier.”

For some, it was just the cultural aspect that made them uncomfortable: “I often feel that I’m not one of them [Americans],” stated Daniel, an F-1 student from Indonesia.

Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, elaborated: “You know, coming here in my 30’s, the cultural difference kicks in … Different culture, different setting. I don’t really feel like … America has accepted me.”

Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, also emphasized that both language and cultural barriers were challenging for him: “Not knowing English much … was very difficult …, another thing was … cultural differences …. You come here with expectations, and then you start seeing how it’s different.”

**Lack of pathways towards permanent residency in the United States.** Lack of pathways towards achieving a U.S. permanent residency status, was another biggest challenge identified by student participants. Some key themes came to light in face of those difficulties: lack of hope, fear of travel, feeling of imprisonment, fear of getting exposed, fear of never seeing family again, feeling of rejection, lack of freedom, and more. The general feeling of frustration with immigration policies was apparent from most of the conversations
with my student sample. Certain students, however, put an extra emphasis on the fact that immigration pathways were almost non-existent:

_The worst part was that there was no hope. No matter how hard you worked, there were zero chances of getting a green card and gaining your freedom. Going to school was slavery .... Here, you are in jail._

(Celine, Former F-1 student from Colombia)

In the same vein, Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, found the current processes for obtaining an immigrant status in the United States to be extremely ineffective. “Once you are done with F-1 visa, you have to look for a job, and you keep getting rejections because of your immigration status,” stated Olivia. “No one wanted to sponsor me for an H-1B visa, so I had to marry an American,” she confessed. Similarly, Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova, expressed her anger with the lack of immigration pathways for international students:

_You study, get a degree and then what? Go back and start everything from scratch? What’s the point? It would be nice to have a pathway towards citizenship. I think that regulations should change._

Lack of pathways towards permanent residency was also seen as the biggest challenge by Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso:

_America is losing a lot by not making it easy. We are committed people and want to work hard, to succeed and to also help people from home. So, the motivation is double and triple from us. I went to Canada for one master’s degree and I got a permanent residency. I got three master’s in America – still nothing._

**Homesickness and loneliness.** Several students identified homesickness and loneliness as their biggest challenges experienced in the United States while in an F-1 status. “Loneliness. You feel alone. No family. You don’t have that love and care,” stated Kat, former F-1 student from Chile. James, former student from Bolivia, also shared that “being away from the family” was the most difficult part of his F-1 journey, especially because he
“was really close with [his] dad.” Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, was also “very close to [his] parents, and … wasn’t used to being alone.” Santiago admitted that “homesickness … was very hard” for him, and that it was more difficult than he “thought that it would.” “I was the only child,” Santiago added, which made it even harder for him and his family to be apart for such a long period of time.

**Difficulties navigating the U.S. education system.** Two student participants found it most challenging to navigate the U.S. education system. When Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, was attending graduate school, she was frustrated with how the grading system worked in the United States:

> There are too many discussions …. You don’t just raise your hand here, like in Russia, here ... you sit in a circle and you have to talk. I wasn’t used to it. I wasn’t expecting that you can talk without raising your hand. The reality is that smart people don’t talk too much, it’s the opposite. Also, in the States, a lot of students talk just for a grade, not because they have something to say. I hated Blackboard too. It’s so stupid. People just write bullshit for a grade.

Whereas Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, was more frustrated with the irrelevance of some of the classes she had to take as a part of her curriculum. “The first class was Psychology, and I hated it because I was falling asleep,” shared Gina. “Then I took a Queer Studies class, and I was like, what da hell, what does it have to do with business?”, she added. What was even more troubling for Gina, was that she had to pay for classes that, in her opinion, did not relate to her field of study: “As the bills were coming, I was getting more and more depressed. I was struggling with school.”

Ultimately, most student participants shared a variety of challenges during their F-1 journeys. Some mentioned three or four, whereas others focused more on only one or two biggest challenges. It is for the reason of narrowing down the responses to moderately justifiable variables that would ultimately produce an objective illustration of findings, that in
the analysis presented above, I put an emphasis on those themes that each student respondent spoke about in a more comprehensive manner and which came to their minds before all else.

**Pre-Departure Expectations and Reality**

*I came with extra-large pair of wings, and they’d shrink and shrink. They sell the American dream. Then you realize it’s not like this.*

(Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia)

For many student participants, their experiences turned out to be different from their pre-departure expectations. In fact, only four respondents (10.5%) stated with utmost certainty that their experiences precisely matched the picture they had drawn for themselves prior to coming to the United States. Whereas another four respondents (10.5%) admitted that they had no expectations prior to their departure to begin with. “I didn’t have any expectations …. I never had an image about America, like it’s beautiful and great, none of that,” said Kat, former F-1 student from Chile.

**Complete dichotomy.** Thirteen student respondents (34%) felt that their lived experiences were entirely opposite from what they had originally expected. “Everything was different. Constant regulations, restrictions, laws,” admitted Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova. “I’ve studied in England for a year before I came here, and it was nothing like that there,” she added. And Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, “was surprised … [by] how hard it was [for him] to blend in.” “When I was in Turkey, I never had difficulties with finding friends,” shared Braden, but “here, blending in was challenging because of the language.”

Derek, former F-1 student from China, spoke in depth about his prior expectations and reality. He spoke about the differences in housing, air quality, eating habits, race, accent, and employment regulations:
The buildings were not tall at all. Residentials in my hometown are like twenty plus floors .... Air was really fresh, so clean, no noise, blue skies .... Before coming to the U.S., I always thought that people, because of Hollywood, were beautiful, as long as they were white. Then I realized that even though they were white, there were some ugly Caucasians out there ....; eating habits were different .... Look at that cake you are eating! ... Plus, the language .... I couldn’t understand anything. The black bus driver had a very thick accent. I DID NOT expect that ...., I expected the language barrier, but the accent was a surprise .... Work restrictions was also something that I never knew about. I thought that I could work anywhere. Campus positions? I got depressed. I was told that those are competitive.

Work restrictions also came as a surprise to Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia. “I didn’t know about work restrictions …. I had no idea it was going to be SO difficult,” admitted Kalvin. “For companies it’s getting really expensive to hire international students even if they want them,” he added.

Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, also “did not anticipate it [life as an F-1 student] as tough as it turned out to be,” financially speaking. “I underestimated the need for money when you come here,” admitted Olivia. “For example, I got a tooth infection, and I couldn’t afford it, so I had to take a bus to New York to see some Russian dentist, so he’d fix it with a discount,” she elaborated. Something that Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, did not necessarily expect, was that despite having “the most powerful [German] passport in the world,” she would “not [be] treated differently.” “The laws are the same as for everyone else .... Here, I’m just another immigrant,” sighed Alexandra. “Here, I have no power. I still have to jump hoops despite being from Germany,” she concluded.

Additional unexpected factors shared by student participants included: difficulties with immigration status adjustment; navigation of healthcare system; finding work; feeling unwelcome; seeing that America was different from the movies and being singled out in a classroom as an international student during the discussions about international politics.
**Two-fold experiences.** Six (16%) participants said that at least one aspect of their experience came as a complete surprise. For example, for Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, “the academic program” was exactly what he had imagined, but “then reality hit [him], and [he] realize[d] that immigration and work [was] … hard.” In a similar fashion, Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, stated that with regard to the “university” and having the “sense of community on campus,” it was exactly what he had imagined, but “seeing a lot of racial division [in the United States] was something that [he] didn’t expect.” And Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, had been prepared “for the lifestyle of [being] stuck alone in the room.” What came as a surprise to Kalvin was “the job search” aspect: “I had no idea … like, damn, why is it so hard?”, he wondered.

**Overestimation.** Another set of participants, four (10.5%), identified that their F-1 ventures failed to meet their original anticipations, in the sense that they had originally thought that life in the United States was going to be more difficult than it had turned out to be. “My college classes were easier than my high school. I thought it was going to be hard, but it was easy. I had to correct my teachers all the time,” shared Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco. Similar opinion was expressed by Kruz, former F-1 student from Czech Republic: “I thought it was gonna be harder than it actually was. In Czech, you have to memorize everything, but here … the school was easy.” From the financial perspective, Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, was also surprised when he “ended up meeting an American family who took [him] in and took care of [him] financially.” “I thought it was going to be really hard,” said Nathan, “but I got very lucky.” And Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, mentioned that “[she] had higher expectations before [she] came” to the United States as compared to what she had ended up witnessing, from the perspective of the
country’s physical characteristics: “Watching movies about America, I had this high profile
country image in my head …, then I come here and see all these high tension wires
everywhere …, not all cars were fancy, like I imagined.”

**Underestimation.** In contrast, seven respondents (18.5%) admitted to having had
lower pre-departure expectations compared to what their experiences in the United States had
actually turned out to be. For example, Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, stated
that “academically and professionally,” his experiences “exceeded” his pre-departure
expectations. “Yes, and more,” echoed James, former F-1 student from Bolivia:

*It went beyond my expectations. I thought it was gonna be tough and impossible, but
when I got here, I saw that I could do so much better than everyone else here.*

In a similar fashion, Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, admitted that her life as an F-1
student “exceeded [her] expectations” because “[putting] aside the personal life, … these
were the best years of [her] life.” “I was very involved on campus,” she elaborated.

New life as an F-1 student in America was also “absolutely more exciting” for Ash,
former F-1 student from India:

*It was even more fun than I thought. I came here with my friend, and the first night we
just bought a pack of Corona beers and drank all night. It was a dream …. And it
wasn’t hot anymore when I landed. The climate was nice.*

Ultimately, for the vast majority of student respondents (79%), experience of being an
international F-1 student in the United States did not meet their pre-departure expectations.
See Table 2 below for the summarized overview of student participants’ responses with
regard to their pre-departure expectations and actual lived experiences of being international
F-1 students.
Table 2

*Student Participants: Pre-Departure Expectations VS Reality*

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<td>TOTAL</td>
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**Earning While Learning: Experiences of F-1 Students at Work**

One of the sample selection criteria was that F-1 student participants had to have held at least one job while they were in F-1 status, and therefore could share their work-related experiences with me. Hereby presented are the findings about: the nature of jobs held by F-1 students; reasons leading up to their decision to gain employment; ways of having found their employers; level of fairness in the treatment of students by their employer at work; relevancy of jobs to students’ career aspirations, as well some other aspects of work-related topics brought to light by student participants.

All 38 student participants (100%) worked during their F-1 journeys. The following six job categories were established from the student participants’ shared experiences: 1) on-campus – non-academic jobs (such as working in cafeteria); 2) on-campus – academic (such as Graduate Assistant (GA)); 3) under-the-table (such as waiting tables at a restaurant); 4) CPT (an internship for an academic credit either paid or unpaid); 5) OPT (optional practical training in their field of study); 6) volunteering/ unpaid internship in the field of a student’s career interest for no academic credit.

Vast majority (82%) of student respondents worked in more than one capacity, and only seven students (18%) identified having had just one work experience. Out of those

108
seven students, three respondents only did their OPT, three only worked on campus (two did their GA, and one held a non-scholarship-tied on-campus job), and one only worked under-the-table. The rest, admitted to having had more than one work experience while in F-1 status, such as working both on campus and off campus, doing an internship under CPT and working under the table, doing one or more CPT and doing OPT, and so on. There were many variations and combinations. Why did all those students work? When did the respondents first realize they wanted a job? Where did they work? How did they find their employers? What was the nature of their jobs? How were students treated by their employers? Did student participants think that working under F-1 status in the United States was going to help them achieve their long-term career goals? The following segment addresses all of the above questions.

**Rationalizing F-1 students’ pursuit of employment.** Why did all those students work? Reasons varied. For some, the decision to work was driven by a financial need, for some – it was for resume building/gaining experience, and some wanted to work to feel like they were being useful. Several students said that work was tied into their program as a condition for receiving a scholarship, without which they would have otherwise had not been able to afford school to begin with. Some respondents had a strategic plan to get an internship at a company that could potentially sponsor them for an H-1B visa. A couple of students decided to get a job because that was something that their friends did, and they just followed, and in one case, the student’s family demanded that they get a job. For many, however, it was a combination of two or more factors.

**Financial need.** Over 50% of student respondents identified financial need as being their main driver for seeking employment in the United States. Related key terms included:
survival, needing money to live, numerous expenses, high tuition costs, running out of money, pocket change, paying for school, wanting to get own place to live, paying rent, extra cash, medical bills, being cut off by parents, seeking financial independence, no money, poor family, income, money to feed family, and saving for school.

Survival. The theme of survival persisted throughout many of the conversations with the student participants who identified their desire to work being directly tied to financial struggles. “I needed money to survive,” exhaled Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, who had to work 80-95 hours a week as a babysitter in exchange for those kids’ family’s sponsorship of her graduate degree. Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, also needed to work because, as she posed, “how else are you going to survive when you have no one to help you financially?” Charlize had to work multiple jobs, pay for school, rent, utilities, and everything else – all while going to school full-time and trying to succeed. In a like manner, Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, stated that she needed to work “to survive …, especially when [she] had a baby.” Luckily, Bina was able to get a graduate assistantship at both her previous and current schools in the United States, so she “never had to work for cash.” Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, also described her entire journey as a “fight for survival,” having had to undertake “bullshit jobs” and deal with continuous “mistreatment at work” just to be able to pay for school, rent and other necessities.

High tuition costs. High tuition costs also pushed many student respondents to seek employment. For example, Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, worked four part-time jobs, trying to make enough money “to save for school” and be able to afford his “next semester’s tuition” because “no one was sponsoring [his] education.” Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, also did not have any financial support “to pay for college”: “I had
no money. My parents didn’t have any, so I had to figure out where to get it,” admitted
Olivia. Likewise, Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, started looking for work when her “dad
cut [her] off”:

_I realized that I was alone, on my own, and there was no one to catch me ..., working
under-the-table was my only option._

Indeed, Kat no other option than to work under-the-table if she wanted to pay for school in
order to stay in F-1 status. Kat was enrolled in a non-degree program, so she could not work
on campus, nor was she eligible for CPT or OPT.

James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, also found himself in much the same
situation, when he “broke his leg” soon after he came to the United States and ended up
spending “all of [his] money on medical bills.” James could not find a job on campus, and
CPT was not an option for him, as he had just recently arrived to the United States as an F-1
student. “I found a job in construction, for cash, paying $18/hour. I hid it from my dad. I
couldn’t afford physical therapy. I worked a lot to pay for my tuition,” shared James.

Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, also had to work to be able to “pay for
school.” Her family did not have any money, and the only reason she was able to get an F-1
status, was because she had met a woman who was kind enough to act as a sponsor for the I-20 purposes. However, in reality, Leila was on her own. Similarly, Gina, former F-1 student
from Colombia, also had to work to pay for school: “I couldn’t afford [X-University]. I was
in so much debt …. As the bills were coming, I was getting more and more depressed.” Gina
admitted that although her parents had supported her financially, “the money was nowhere
near enough” to cover all of her expenses.

_Need for extra money._ Even those students who had financial support from their
private sponsors or families, and therefore did not have issues with paying for school, still
wanted to work to have money for things that were not school related. For example, Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, not only had his family back home paying for his tuition, but also had a free place to stay in the United States: “The first two years I stayed with my aunt for free, but I also babysat for free. Then, after that, I wanted to do my own thing, get my own place. That’s when I was like, I need to get a job.” Another international student from Morocco (Morris), who was currently in an F-1 status, also had his family covering school tuition and supporting him financially, but Morris had “decided to work … to get some pocket money.” “I wanted to get into the habit of chasing my own paycheck,” he said. “As we say in my culture, [I wanted to] learn how to ‘chase your piece of bread’ at a young age,” Morris explained. “I also wanted to get some return on investment,” he added. Peter, former F-1 student from India, whose family had originally agreed to and had sponsored his undergraduate degree in the United States, eventually decided to pursue his graduate degree and therefore “had to work to survive … and had to find loopholes to work,” as he did not want to be a financial burden to his parents any longer.

*Graduate assistants with full scholarships and stipends.* Seven student participants had a graduate assistantship (GA-ship) from school, so their tuition was covered through that channel and, therefore, eliminated the tuition burden. All but one of the GA’s emphasized that had they not have received a GA-ship as a part of their admissions packet, they would have never come to the United States, as they would have never had been able to afford it. “If I didn’t get a GA-ship, I wouldn’t have come here. I’d be scared to work for cash, so I’d never come. I’m not that bold,” said Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria. Despite having a graduate assistantship, however, all but two study participants shared with me that they had undertaken additional jobs during their F-1 journeys. For example, Aleksandra, an F-1
student from Germany, did several paid internships in addition to her GA-ship “to help pay for additional expenses and to get work experience.” Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, also mentioned that she had gotten another job in addition to her GA-ship because she needed work experience, money, and something to do during free time:

I needed money to pay for rent. Plus, classes in grad school are like three nights a week, so what do you do with the rest of the time? You get bored. Plus, you need work experience. How are you gonna find a job after school ends? What are you going to put on your resume? And having some work experience would help out with job search. And when you apply for CPT, it’s impossible to find jobs. Of course, if you are at MIT or Harvard, it might be easy, but when you are at a whatever college, your chances are low. Plus, you don’t know how to even LOOK for a job. I worked at [X-Restaurant] and I applied in person .... I didn’t know how to do it online .... I walked into [X-Restaurant]. The boss told me he didn’t care whether I had papers or not, he just needed good workers.

The two student participants who had chosen to only do their GA-ship and not look for an additional job, also had their reasons. Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, for example, admitted that he simply did not need another job because “[he] was very lucky to have met [his] host family in the U.S., who took care of [him], so [he] didn’t have to go through the torture of being harassed at some under-the-table job.” While Bina’s experience was quite different: “I had a child … and had to take care of him. You run home and cook and give your attention to your child,” explained Bina, “you don’t have time.”

**Resume-building/ work experience.** For many students, the main driver for seeking employment was to gain work experience to help with resume building. For example, Jaden, an F-1 student from India, “always had more than enough money; money wasn’t something [he] needed,” but he undertook several jobs (two on-campus jobs and one CPT) because he wanted to “build [his] resume.” Similarly, Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, who felt comfortable financially, decided to work because he realized that he needed “experience for [his] master’s.” Kalvin shared that he wanted to go to graduate school to study business, and
experience was one of the admissions requirements. “When I started looking for schools for MBA, they all wanted work experience,” he admitted.

Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, also wanted experience: “Why even go to the U.S. if you don’t get to experience what it’s like to work there?” Richard wondered. “I was a grown-up man, I wanted to work,” he added. Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam, admitted that she wanted to find an internship “not for the program, but for [her] own career goals.” Tess ended up finding an internship that was not directly related to her field of study but was in the industry where she wanted to work in the future: “I needed that experience to move on with my career.” And for Bianca, former F-1 student from Honduras, being able to work part-time on campus while being a full-time student, not only provided her with an opportunity to “gain more work experience,” but also “helped [her] keep a healthy life balance.”

**Circumstantial cases.** Some student participants found themselves working as a result of an influence from their friends or peers. For example, Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova, originally was not looking for work, but one day a “peer student told [her] about this IT Helpdesk job on campus,” and she went for it because “it was easy.” Anya admitted, “I’d clock in and go shopping.” Ash, former F-1 student from India, also “wasn’t looking for a job, but … got it” when “one day, [his] roommates came over and told [him] about … this position on campus … they both applied for.” Ash said, “I was like, I also want to apply. I interviewed for the same position, and my buddies didn’t get the job, and I was the one who ended up getting it … I was just having fun.” Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, whose upper-class family was currently sponsoring his entire education and
other expenses, was now working for cash because his uncle told him to. Jack admitted that he never actually wanted to work but was now working anyways:

*I work to have extra cash. If I didn’t work, I wouldn’t care either way. I don’t have any moral values. I’d rather be dependent on my rich father for the rest of my life and not care. My uncle told me to go and work, and I was like, ok.*

For Maya, former F-1 student from Russia, the job “just happened.” Initially, Maya never even thought about studying or working abroad, since she already had a PhD and held a high-level position in her home country. But then she was invited to attend a fully-funded MBA program in the United States. So, upon graduation, she ended up getting a job offer from one of the biggest companies in the United States. “It did not matter to me, but it happened that way,” Maya said. And Zayden, former F-1 student from Burkina Faso, shared that an unexpected “crisis back home made [him] want to work here,” and having to combine work with school was not something that he had originally planned to do.

**Participation in the life of society.** Several student participants reported that work meant more than just money or experience to them. They wanted to feel like they were full members of their host communities, and work was one of the channels.

*I wanted to work because I didn’t want to be useless. Even if it’s just a dirty job, my parents always told me it’s better to do it than not …. I got an on-campus job at a cafeteria. I was a prep cook and made coffee.*

(Daniel, F-1 student from Indonesia)

For Derek, former F-1 student from China, work was also very important, as it was a way to “meet new people … and stay out of the Chinese circle.” Derek, who had held several on-campus jobs, off-site internships and constantly volunteered as an F-1 student, said that he was “really grateful for those [work] experiences” because it meant a lot to him to have been able to simply “say hi to people, be able to serve people.” “When you receive an appreciation from the people you serve, it is so important,” Derek concluded.
Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, also considered an opportunity to serve people as her biggest motivation for getting a job. Mirah’s family was “well-off, so [she] didn’t have the need to earn money,” but she wanted to make a difference. So, when Mirah found an internship at [X-Center] that did investigative reporting, she became fully committed to helping the organization bring stories of real people out into the world. Mirah worked there almost entirely for free, but she “know that the center was small and financially in trouble.” What mattered to Mirah, an aspiring journalist, was that she “found the story about suicide in jails,” the story she “care[d] deeply” about. “I really wanted for my story to go out there and get published,” she said. “I cared about it … because people weren’t safe, and they weren’t bad people,” Mirah explained. Despite working extra hours and being underpaid, Mirah “regarded the experience as a positive one” because it not only provided her with the opportunity to publish the story and win awards for it, but even enabled her to continue doing research on jails at the PhD level.

**Immigration pathway.** There are limited pathways for international F-1 students to stay in the country upon program completion. Their options are either to continue education further by pursuing another degree at an SEVP-accredited school or to adjust status with the USCIS (ICE, 2019b). An employer may sponsor an F-1 student for an H-1B temporary work visa if they have appropriate education and skills (Jacobs, 2019). Therefore, it is important for international students to showcase those skills in order get a shot at being sponsored.

One-third of student respondents thought that getting a job while they were still in school, would significantly increase their chances at being able to find an employer who would eventually sponsor them for an H-1B visa. For example, Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, had been looking for an “internship that could eventually turn into a long-term
Braden ended up finding the right employer, who not only sponsored him for an H-1B visa, but later even filed for his employment-based green card. Similarly, Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, said that “it was important for [him] to gain work experience to be able to compete with American peers in the future … to get an H-1B visa,” as going back to Venezuela and “dealing with the political and economic crisis” was not an option. After having had gotten his H-1B application approval, Santiago had thought, “thank goodness, I don’t have to jump the fence now!”

Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, worked at a restaurant when he was in school, and by the time he was done with his program, Ian “asked [his employer] about helping [him] with an OPT job, and [the employer] offered [him] an office job.” After OPT was done, Ian’s employer applied for his H-1B visa. In the same vein, Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, ended up getting sponsored for an H-1B by the employer she had found and worked for while she was still in school. Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, also worked for a company while in school in the hopes of being sponsored for an H-1B visa, however for him, the road was not as smooth as it turned out for Ian and Tatiana, since after having had worked for that company for almost three years through multiple CPTs and an OPT, “[the employer] kicked [him] out because they didn’t want to sponsor [him] for a work visa.” Nevertheless, eventually, Richard was able to find the right sponsor, but he “had to settle for a tiny salary because they sponsored [him], and [he] needed a legal status.” James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, had a goal to find a “desk job with an office and A/C,” after having had been working in construction for a while in school and got “really lucky”: “I got a job at [X-Corporation], and they sponsored me for an H-1B right away.”
**Job necessity: the timeframe of realization.** When did the student respondents first realize they wanted a job? The timing was different for everyone, but generally, the timeframe of realization was divided equally into those who wanted to work from day one (50%), like Abigail, former F-1 Student from Colombia, for whom being able to make money was a “number one goal from the start,” and those, for whom the realization came later (50%), mostly when student participants had realized they needed work experience in order to have the potential of building their careers in the United States or, otherwise, had encountered an unexpected financial circumstance. Like Derek, former F-1 student from China, who stated the following: “As an undergraduate, I couldn’t do much, but when I got older, I realized that I needed experience to build my resume, so that’s when I was really looking for work.”

Just because certain students had expressed desire to work from the very start, did not necessarily mean that they ended up seeking employment immediately, however. For example, Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, really wanted to work as soon as he landed in the United States, however, he “got lucky” when he had met a kind U.S. family “who decided to ‘adopt’ [him] and volunteered to pay for all of [his] expenses.” So, for the longest time, Nathan was not even looking for work. Or Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, who wanted to work from the very start of her program, but “knew [she] couldn’t and … didn’t want to break the law.”

Conversely, just because some of the student participants who initially had no desire to work until later in the journey, did not actually mean they did not end up working from the very start. For example, Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, “never wanted to work,” but started working right away, as his uncle had pressured him into taking a job at a pizzeria to
“learn what it’s like to work” by taking him by the hand and bringing him to a place where the employer was his uncle’s close friend. Or Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, who had originally thought that she would be strictly focusing on her studies and who then realized that her “husband,” an F-2 dependent, “did not have the right to work in the U.S. and couldn’t find a job,” so she ended up taking on several on-campus jobs right away in order to provide for her family.

**F-1 students’ places of employment.** Where did all those students work? Thirty-eight student respondents worked in over 20 different industries, including (in alphabetical order): academia/ research/ teaching; child care/ babysitting; construction; dining/ catering; engineering; finance/ banking/ investments/ accounting; hospitality/ housekeeping; healthcare; higher education/ student affairs; hospitality; information technology; K-12; marketing/ media/ communications; non-profit; restaurant/ customer service; retail/ wholesale/ sales; sports/ coaching, and transportation.

**On-campus.** About 55% of the respondents held at least one job on campus while they were F-1 students. Seven participants (18%) identified having had worked as Graduate Assistants; in that capacity, they were either conducting research, teaching, or performing random office duties. “They just put us here and there and tell us what to do,” Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, chuckled. Fourteen respondents (37%) held regular, non-scholarship-related on-campus jobs. Some worked at their school’s cafeteria: cooking, prepping, making coffee, catering food to fellow students as well as faculty and staff, collecting payments at the cash register, mopping floors, etc. For example, Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, “worked two different dining jobs on campus” at her previous school. She was a “cashier and a sandwich maker.”
Some students worked in their school’s Student Affairs division as peer advisors, ambassadors, tutors, office assistants, social media coordinators, etc. For example, Derek, former F-1 student from China “worked as an office assistant at the Center for International Students and as a student ambassador.” A couple of student participants taught a foreign language they had native proficiency in, to their U.S. peer students at a language club on campus. “My last three years, I worked on campus as a Spanish tutor … I loved my job … It’s like a class, but it’s not a school class,” Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, shared. One student worked for an IT department as a helpdesk assistant, and one – worked at their school’s bookstore.

All but two students who worked on campus during their F-1 journeys, however, also worked off campus, either simultaneously with their on-campus positions or at a different time. The only exception to that scenario was Kruz, former F-1 student from Czech Republic, who technically worked on campus as a videographer yet that job was in his field of study, Visual Communications, and was directly tied to his CPT and OPT. Kruz was getting paid a “professional wage” and was doing “instructional videos for [his] university.” Other student participants who worked on campus, however, either worked as GA-s or else held a regular on-campus job; in addition, they held off-campus jobs, including CPTs, OPTs, not-for-credit internships, volunteering positions, cash/ under-the-table jobs, or a combination of two or more. For example, Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, not only worked on campus as a “social media coordinator for 20 hours a week,” but also had an unpaid internship at a radio station during that time. When she became eligible for CPT, she found a job at a nonprofit newsroom and ended up doing both her CPT and OPT there. Mirah also got an additional unpaid internship during her OPT at a television station. Ash, former F-1 student from India,
first worked on the “marketing team in the admissions department … for 20 hours a week … on campus … as a student ambassador,” and then got an internship at a mobile service company and did his CPT there.

Ian, former student from Morocco, worked on campus as a tutor, “helping [his fellow] students with homework … the first two years,” but during that time he also worked as a babysitter for his aunt in exchange for free rent. Towards the end of his sophomore year, Ian decided to take on a job at a restaurant, where he worked as a server until graduation: “I didn’t do any CPTs in my major. When I finished my degree, the guy that I used to work for at the restaurant … offered me an office job,” Ian shared. Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, also worked at a restaurant in addition to her on-campus employment as a Graduate Assistant. At the end of the day, most of those student participants who identified as having had held on-campus jobs, also did their CPT, OPT, or both, following their on-campus experience. Like Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan majoring in Accounting, who first worked as a caterer on campus and then did her CPT at a nursing home.

**Off-campus.** Off-campus places of employment are hereby defined as employers who are not affiliated with the student participants’ schools in any capacity. While 55% of student participants had worked both on and off campus, with 5% only having had worked on campus, in contrast, 40% of the respondents had only worked off campus. Out of those 40% who only held one or more off-campus jobs, just two respondents stated that they did not work while the school was in session, having had ended up undertaking an OPT, a part of their F-1 status employment authorization package, right after graduation. One student had accepted a job at a major accounting firm, and one was currently working at a local high school. The rest of the student respondents who only worked off campus, either did both,
CPT and OPT (and in some cases several CPTs followed by an OPT) or worked exclusively without proper work authorization/under-the-table. Several students, however, did a combination of both. I am talking about the scope and nature of those jobs later in the chapter, however. Therefore, I am hereby simply trying to present a picture of where those students were working without getting into too many details on why and how they found themselves in those places of employment.

Student respondents who did both their CPT(s) and OPT and had never worked on campus or undertaken any other forms of employment, worked in the following industries: finance and healthcare. Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, majoring in Finance, did his CPT at “[a major financial services and bank holding company],” which then “turned into a long-term job.” While Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam majoring in Business with a concentration in Healthcare Management, first did her CPT at a marketing analytics firm and then switched to working at a “medical devices company” for her OPT.

Those student respondents who were only employed off campus under-the-table, worked in the following industries: childcare, coaching, construction, finance, hospitality, and retail. One student had exclusively worked as a full-time babysitter for one family while also going to school full-time as an F-1 student. One student had worked exclusively in construction: “This guy I went to school with…was building a mansion on the river…I started with sweeping the mansion, vacuuming the place…Then, I started building stuff from stone, like soap stone work.” James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, shared. Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, was currently working at a “pizza place,” and so far it was the only job he had undertaken. And Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, had only worked for a small “equity research firm,” analyzing the company’s financials. Other students did a
variety of jobs, mainly working at restaurants and retail stores. For example, Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, initially found a job at a “chocolate store” and later switched to working at a “jewelry store.” While Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, first worked at a restaurant for a “fat Greek guy” and then found a job at “[a retail store].” And Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, worked as a sports coach at a “gymnasium,” while also doing “other odd jobs on the side.” Zack worked at restaurants, “pizza joints,” and retail stores.

Student participants who did CPT(s), or CPT(s) and OPT, while working under-the-table, represented the following industries: childcare, finance, hospitality, and transportation. One student did a combination of babysitting, having had worked for several families, and working for hotels under several CPTs and an OPT, doing everything “from housekeeping to management” (Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia). Celine, another former F-1 student from Colombia, worked for a restaurant under several CPTs and an OPT while also serving tables at a different restaurant under-the-table. In a similar fashion, Peter, former F-1 student from India, worked for “[a financial investment company]” under his CPT and OPT while also working for another financial investment company as a consultant under-the-table.

Finally, Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, worked at several restaurants where she did everything from catering to bartending and in the meantime, managed to do her first CPT at “[a major financial services corporation]” and her second CPT – at “[a transportation firm].” See Table 3 below for the broad summary of student participants’ places of employment, categorized as on-campus only, on + off-campus, and off-campus only.
Table 3

Student Participants: Places of Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>On-Campus Only</th>
<th>On + Off-Campus</th>
<th>Off-Campus Only</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>55%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F-1 students’ job seeking strategies. How did student participants find their employers? Sources varied yet there was enough consistency in the responses to create specific categories. Altogether, there were ten ways identified by students through which they had found their employers (listed hereby in the following order: from most popular to the least): 1) Career services Department at School; 2) Family Connection; 3) Online; 4) Networking; 5) Direct Walk-In Inquiry; 6) Part of the Academic Program Admission Packet; 7) Friend Connection; 8) Staffing Agency/ Recruiter; 9) Direct Referral, and 10) Local Country-Specific Community.

Out of the total of 82 jobs (100%), the nature and scope of which were shared with me by the student respondents, 22 (27%) jobs were found by the students with the help of their schools’ Career Services department. Fifty-five percent of the jobs uncovered by students through the help of their career advisors were on-campus jobs, while 36% – were CPTs or OPTs and 9% were unpaid/ non-for-credit internships of volunteering nature.

Twelve jobs (15%) were obtained through a family connection; ten (12%) – through an online source, such as Craigslist, Indeed or LinkedIn. Nine jobs (11%) resulted from professional networking; eight (10%) – through a direct walk-in inquiry made at physical locations of employment; six jobs (7%), all of which were GA-ships, were a part of students’ admissions packets, and the other six (7%) resulted from a friend’s connection (one was a GA-ship, the rest varied). Four jobs (5%) were assigned to student participants by a staffing
agency or a recruiter; three (4%) – came in as direct referrals. Finally, two jobs (2%) were acquired through help from student participants’ fellow countrymen’s communities existing within their residency locations. See Table 4 below for the summary of student participants job acquisition sources. “C/S” stands for career services; “Fam” stands for family connection; “Web” stands for online sources; “N/W” stands for networking; “W/I” stands for direct walk-in inquiry; “Adm” stands for part of admissions package; “Fri” stands for friend connection; “S/A” stands for staffing agency/recruiter; “D/R” stands for direct referral, and “F/C” stands for fellow countrymen in the local community.

Table 4

Student Participants: Job Acquisition Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>C/S</th>
<th>Fam</th>
<th>Web</th>
<th>N/W</th>
<th>W/I</th>
<th>Adm</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>S/A</th>
<th>D/R</th>
<th>F/C</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, see Table E.22 in Appendix E for a comprehensive summary of student participants’ means of finding their employers juxtaposed with the industry, nature, and type of employment.

Nature and scope of jobs undertaken by F-1 students. What was the nature of the jobs student respondents were engaged in? What were their experiences like? How did they end up finding themselves working for their employers? Rich qualitative data obtained during one-on-one in-depth interviews with the study participants revealed numerous intricacies of their unique lived experiences, filled with mixed emotions and at times alarming confessions, uncovering a broad range of circumstances leading to some of the specific jobs undertaken during their F-1 journeys.
**Job responsibilities performed by student respondents.** Apparent heterogeneity of the student participants’ job nature was evidenced through an examination of approximately 40 job titles identified by the respondents, hereby listed in alphabetical order: accountant, babysitter; bank associate; bartender; bookstore associate; business administrator; cashier; caterer; cleaner; coach; construction worker; cook; counselor; customer service representative; direct caregiver; engineer; equity research analyst; finance consultant; golf club front desk associate; hotel receptionist; housekeeper; insurance sales representative; investment fiscal analyst; peer advisor; peer mentor; IT helpdesk assistant; marketing analyst; office assistant; package handler; pizza delivery driver; news reporter; sales associate; social media coordinator; stock broker; student ambassador; teacher/ tutor; trade center associate; videographer; waiter/ server, and warehouse worker.

The above listed jobs were undertaken by the respondents either on campus or off campus. Some were of professional nature and directly related to their majors, others were not. Ultimately, there was a mix of experiences shared with me by the study participants with regard to their jobs’ nature. Some were negative, some – positive, and for many it was a combination of both. I hereby present a rough summary of those experiences by dividing them into some generalized categories with an attempt to operationalize a multifaceted nature and scope of jobs undertaken by the respondents. I first talk about certain students’ rough transition from on-campus positions to the off-campus ones. Then, I describe the experiences of those students who had a smoother transition yet not without some bumps. Next section covers some of the more negative experiences, while the final one focuses more on the positive outcomes.
**From on to off-campus: a rough transition.** After Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova majoring in Business Management, had done some work on campus, she realized that her program was coming to an end, and she needed to find a “real job” for her OPT. Anya ended up reaching out to her friend, a first-generation immigrant from Ukraine, who then connected her with a shipping company that was managed by “some Ukrainian guy.” Anya really wanted to stay in the United States, so she did not care much about where to work, as long as she could prolong her F-1 status through OPT: “I did some stupid shipping stuff …, it had nothing to do with my degree,” Anya admitted.

Similarly, Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan majoring in Accounting, after having had worked on campus for several years, decided to look for CPT in attempt to create a potential pathway to long-term employment. What ended up happening to Stella was that she found herself working “as a caregiver at a nursing home under a fake CPT”: “My employer gave me job description that stated that I was doing finance stuff for him,” Stella confessed.

Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, in addition to her GA-ship, wanted to work in her field of study: “In my profession, I need a lot of hours for licensure,” she said. Alexandra ended up finding a mental health counseling job that was directly related to her major, but “the process was stressful … because of the immigration and HR requirements.” “I was going around in circles: HR – CPT – School – HR – CPT – School …. The process took four months to get hired instead of one month!”, Alexandra exclaimed in anguish.

Meanwhile, Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, tired of working two on-campus jobs for a minimum wage, also started looking for something off campus: “I needed money, experience … I was knocking on the door of all organizations.” Tina ended up finding an
internship at a “local community organization,” where she was hired on a condition that she would “first volunteer for a couple of months” before they would start paying her. Tina took on the offer, and eventually did her CPT with that company, making 17 dollars an hour.

For Ash, former F-1 student from India, finding an off-campus job was also a big challenge, unlike his experience with obtaining a job on campus that he was practically handed to as a result of a simple interview. Ash was majoring in Information Technology, but ended up undertaking a customer service job at a mobile service company for his CPT:

_I was applying for jobs that I thought I was qualified for, but once they saw my status, I was turned down right away without even getting a chance to show them what I’m capable of._

Derek, former F-1 student from China majoring in Finance, never had problems with finding on-campus employment either. However, when the time came to look for an off-campus position to do his OPT, he quickly realized that “job opportunities were limited.” Desperate for a job, Derek had reached out to his aunt, who owned a wholesale company in a nearby state. Derek’s aunt ended up hiring him for a job that had nothing to do with his major, yet his job description said “finance.” Meanwhile, Derek worked in “the distribution center doing operations stuff … and worked part-time as a paralegal” for the same company:

_The company makes stuff in China, and I helped them distribute those things …. So, that’s my first role … I also … filed clients’ paperwork and translated traffic tickets and divorce certificates …. What they really needed me there for though, was to go unload products from trains, it’s labor work. I’d go to shoe stores, drive to places, work as a fork lifter, I drove a high-roller! It’s a warehouse._

Derek was currently still employed with the same company, as it sponsored his H-1B visa, and felt “like shit”:

_I can’t go anywhere else because I get my work visa through this company. With those limitations, you always end up with something that you don’t really want. Once you are there, you are stuck there._
A seemingly straight off-campus road with some bumps. In contrast, Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, did not have a lot of trouble finding a job off campus in addition to her on-campus job as a GA. Since “career services didn’t help at all,” Tatiana, who majored in Management, decided to take the matters into her own hands and ended up finding a job on her own. She did “inspections, cooking, training” at “[X-Restaurant]”: first, under-the-table and later, as a part of her CPT and OPT. The company even ended up sponsoring her H-1B visa. Nevertheless, by no means it was Tatiana’s dream job; “delivering pizza” was not something that she had envisioned herself doing with a master’s degree from a U.S. university.

For Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, it was not that challenging to find a job either, however he had to navigate the complexities of immigration system for a long time to be able to continue working there:

I started an internship … that turned into a long-term job … in the last year of my first master’s. My first master’s was MBA, and I wanted to do finance. I graduated in 2009 during the financial crisis. They [employer] wanted to keep me, and it was a supporting point for me to get another master’s, this time in Finance, so I went to [X-University] …. I worked part-time as a CPT. Everything is confidential, right?... Towards the end of the program, the International Office told me that there are limitations, and made students not work for more than six months for one company. I worked full-time during summers, then part-time during semesters. I did OPT for six months, then I got a H-1B visa for three years.

The company where Braden had already worked for over three years as an investment fiscal analyst by then, ended up sponsoring him for a green card, yet still, “the process took much longer than expected because the lawyer made a mistake and we had to redo everything,” Braden complained.

The entire CPT-OPT process was also a “big pain” for Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, who had to attend several “sketchy schools” after he had graduated with an MBA
from [X-University] in order to remain in F-1 status and be able to continue working for his company where he had originally got a job through an OPT: “They [employer] didn’t sponsor me for H-1B … they couldn’t, so I had to do CPTs through other schools to work there.” Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, also found herself in a similar situation, when she specifically “transferred to [X-College] because it was cheap and good for status.” Celine’s problem was that she was attending a famous private school “for real education,” majoring in Environmental Sustainability, but since it did not provide its students with an F-1 status, that meant no CPT or OPT opportunities. So, Celine had to attend another school, where she majored in Hospitality for both immigration status and to be able to work, while simultaneously attending her school of choice, [X-University]: “I used [X-College] to keep status and attended [X-University] for real education.” Celine elaborated:

[X-College] was like 99 percent students who were only there for status. That school is where you find the poor students … The most difficult part was the fact that I had to attend classes at [X-College]. I would rather just pay them and not go. It was such a waste of time … but through [X-College], I was able to do CPT and OPT in hospitality and customer service … I worked bullshit jobs [though], cafes and stuff.

If it were not for her status, Celine would have never worked in the restaurant industry. She “volunteered a billion times to gain experience” in the field she was really passionate about, environmental sustainability, but she never had the capacity to gain real paid employment without an I-20 that stated “Environmental Sustainability” as her major.

**Stuck in a deep off-campus road pothole.** Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia majoring in Hospitality Management, had quite a journey as an F-1 student. Before she was able to do her CPT, she “worked as a nanny of four kids”:

*I drove them [kids] around everywhere … and their parents gave me cash every week. Sometimes they wouldn’t pay me enough …. I also did other nanny jobs on the side …. They paid more.*
For her CPT, Gina undertook a job as a front desk associate at a golf club. There was no security there, however, and she almost got raped:

One time these five guys came up to me and ... started surrounding me. I felt like, this is it. There was no one around .... There was a huge snowstorm, and we were in and out of power .... I was the only girl in the resort, with no protection. I locked myself in the closet. I took the phone with me and if customers called, I’d answer from the closet. I called the police, and the police came .... I didn’t feel safe at that place, so I put my 2-week notice.

Similarly, Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, also majoring in Hospitality, had to take on a number of under-the-table jobs till finally becoming eligible to apply for CPT. She worked as a waitress and a bartender at several restaurants:

It was tough ... especially in the winter ... because it was slow, and they’d tell me to go home .... The uncertainty was bad ... and I was counting on that money!

When Charlize became eligible for CPT, however, she landed an internship with a finance company as an office assistant: “It was legit. I wanted to continue working there, but there were no positions,” so Charlize had to leave and found herself back in the underground economy with no financial stability or any legal protection.

James, former F-1 student from Bolivia majoring in Computer Science, found himself working in construction when he broke his leg and ran out of money after having had spent it all on medical bills:

It was tough working in construction for 12 hours a day, smelling, sweating, stopping by McDonald’s before college to wash my armpits ... I had to find strength to go to school ... I did my homework at McDonald’s.

Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine majoring in Student Affairs and Higher Education Administration, also had a really difficult journey before she was finally able to find a CPT as an admissions officer at a community college. Prior to that, however, Leila worked at
restaurants as a waitress and at retail stores as a customer service representative, all under-the-table:

You always feel insecure ... like someone can come and ask you what status you are here on .... I was always scared to be caught working. I was very discrete. Not talking too much to people, not sharing much. The worst feeling was that I had to lie a lot. You go to bed with that shitty feeling. You work with people all day, and they don’t know the truth about you. If they find the truth, then they never trust you again.

Leila ended up getting an OPT at a private university after her CPT and getting married to her boyfriend, who, unfortunately, turned out to be abusive. And Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia majoring in Project Management, had to work as a babysitter for three children while she was in school. Unfortunately, Abigail did not have the capacity to undertake any professional jobs because she felt indebted to the family where she had originally worked as an Au Pair for two years on a J-1 visa. Since the Au Pair program was designed to last no longer than two years, Abigail’s host family had offered to sponsor her F-1 status if she was willing to continue working for them, and she agreed, as she really wanted to stay in the United States and go to school:

I was babysitting anywhere from 80 to 95 hours a week. I was trapped, I was a slave to the family that sponsored my F-1. I would have left if I didn’t owe them. I survived on Red Bull and coffee, I studied at nights till 1 o’clock in the morning, and had to wake up at 6 am. It was so hard!

**Positive experience and a smooth road ahead.** Certainly not all jobs undertaken by student participants had negative elements. There were quite a few respondents who talked about how incredible their jobs turned out to be, and how happy they were with where they had ended up. For example, Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco majoring in Business Administration, shared that “after OPT was done, [his employer] applied for [his] H-1B.” Ian was currently “still working for the office headquarters of eight restaurants.” He did “all the finance stuff [t]here” and was very happy. Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia majoring in
Finance, “lucked out” with a “staffing agency … recommended to [him] by [his] advisor” and was now on his “third job” assigned to him by the agency. Kalvin was currently working at a local high school “with only six other people” on the staff and felt like he was “a part of a family,” where everyone was “so nice to [him].”

Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan majoring in Finance, had a “very nice” under-the-table job as an equity research analyst:

_I actually had an awesome job ... it was a very nice job. I followed the [Craigslist] ad, and my boss reached out to me right away. His own wife got deported from the U.S., so he knew the system was fucked-up. He knew it wasn’t legal for me to work, but he was very supportive and understood my situation .... It wasn’t ... much money, but at least I could get a good reference for future finance jobs._

Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela majoring in Business, “LOVED all [his] work experiences.” On-campus jobs helped him “learn transferable skills …, build [his resume], and … have a social life” as well as an opportunity “to give back.” Santiago got his first CPT at a major accountancy firm with the help of a family connection: “my dad’s partner worked there.” Same with the second CPT, where he worked as a broker at a stock exchange company: “dad helped me out again.” Santiago found his third CPT, which then turned into OPT and later H-1B, on his own, however – through an organization that was “helping … minorities … with overcoming an opportunity gap.” Finally, Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam majoring in Business, “got very lucky because [she] had IT experience … that [she] gained … in Dubai” where she had worked for five years prior to coming to the United States: “The company was looking for that experience,” Tess admitted, despite that company having had advertised the position as a “marketing analyst.”

_**Conclusive revelation.**_ Ultimately, regardless of what student participants thought of their job experiences, empirical data collected during the interviews produced some major
findings about the nature of their jobs. Out of the total of 38 respondents, 14 (37%) admitted to having had worked without proper work authorization, while 12 (32%) acknowledged to having had done their CPT(s) or OPT in the field that was entirely unrelated to their major. In sum, vast majority of the student sample (69%) reported, either knowingly or otherwise unintentionally, to having had violated one of the conditions for lawful maintenance of their nonimmigrant F-1 status outlined within the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations under Title 8 – Aliens and Nationality, part 214 – Nonimmigrant Classes, subpart 214.1 – Requirements for admission, extension, and maintenance of status, section (e) – Employment. Whether those violations affected student participants’ relationships with their employers or in any way influenced their long-term career objectives, is uncovered in the next two subsections.

**Employer treatment of F-1 workers.** How were students treated by their employers? Sixty-eight percent of the respondents were treated well by their employers, and never felt helpless or harassed at work. Whereas 16% reported cases of major employer mistreatment in the workplace, and the other 16% had mixed feelings about their employers and the ways in which they were treated. Additionally, a couple of student respondents shared some stories of other international students who they knew were being mistreated at work. See Table 5 below for the summary of student participants’ responses with regard to their employer treatment.

Table 5

**Student Participants: Employer Treatment of F-1 Workers**

<table>
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<th>Employer Treatment</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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<td>68%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Fair treatment by employer. Regardless of the nature of student participants’ jobs, the vast majority reported having had been treated by their employers fairly. Sixty-eight percent had positive experiences. “I can’t complain about my employers … when I worked on campus, I had pretty good bosses,” said Bianca, former F-1 student from Honduras. Jaden, an F-1 student from India, also reported having had “a good experience”: “I didn’t want to do anything illegal because I always thought long-term.” Jaden was under the impression that only “people who work[ed] … under-the-table” were at risk of being mistreated by their employers.

Although I agree with Jaden about unauthorized workers being at a higher risk of discrimination, data from this study showed that it is not always the case. For example, Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, who was now working at a “pizza joint” under-the-table, shared that his employer treated him “nicely.” He specified that he was “always getting paid on time,” made a good wage, and was given as many work hours as he wanted. One time Jack’s employer even allowed him to work “70 hours a week, paying [him] 15 dollars an hour with overtime” when he needed extra cash to continue playing his online video game that involved bets. Similarly, Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, who had also worked at a pizzeria while in F-1 status, shared that her “bosses and colleagues were excellent” and that she was “lucky.”

James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, who had been forced to take on a construction job under-the-table when he broke his leg and spent all his money on medical bills, said that “people treated [him] ok”: “I was the only and first Bolivian there, and everyone was curious …. I mostly worked with Mexicans …. So, I was never treated badly.” Similarly, Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, who had worked in finance under-
the-table throughout her F-1 journey, never experienced any mistreatment on behalf of her employer, despite being in a precarious position of working without an authorization:

My boss was rather interesting ... he had no filter, so if he didn’t like your work, he’d say ‘are you fucking kidding me?’ .... It was his personality. He was very tough, but funny. I was ok with it. One kid quit cause he couldn’t take it .... It was a shock that he spoke like that, but aside from work, he was nice, so I didn’t care .... You know, I think that I always set the standards. I voice my opinion. If someone mistreated me in any way, I’d let them know right away. I’d obviously get the accent jokes, but I’d always treat them as jokes. I actually used it as strength: ‘Let me talk to that client in my Russian accent, we’ll see what he decides!’

Just like Olivia, yet never having had to work under-the-table, Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, also used his foreigner status as an icebreaker in some situations at work. Santiago said that at his current company, where he had originally started as an intern under a CPT, he worked with “a team of very white Americans, straight males, all Trump supporters.” Despite being a minority in the office, however, Santiago “never felt a direct offence,” even though he could feel “that big elephant in the room.” Santiago said that it was actually him who would be making jokes to clear the room from any politics-related tension: “If I make a mistake, I fake a strong accent and make people laugh,” Santiago chuckled.

Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, stated that he was “being treated nice” by his current employer as well. “Everyone is so nice to me .... I think it’s because I’m young, and everyone is in their 40’s and 50’s, so I’m like their baby,” Kalvin shared. Daniel, another F-1 student from Indonesia was “treated fairly at work” as well. He thought that the reason why he did not have any problems was because he “kn[e]w how to interact with Americans”:

My English is good, and culturally I’m more verse than some other international students cause I’ve been here [in the United States] for a while. It is easy for me to connect with Americans .... In fact, I even had more troubles connecting with fellow international students at work.
Morris, an F-1 student from Morocco, said that his current employer was “very understanding, supportive and taught [him] how to be goal-oriented,” however he thought that “some of [his] workmates” were initially jealous of him for “being the youngest employee and performing well,” but right now they were getting along. Rachael, F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, who once did an unpaid internship in her field of study for no academic credit, also mentioned that she was treated well by her “boss,” but had an incident with her colleagues, which she had found to be “offensive”:

There was this comedy show ... about the corruption in Saudi and how they arrested all the people and put them in a hotel .... So, my American colleagues were talking about it and laughing .... I found it offensive. My boss apologized though.

Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, who “didn’t get any bad treatment from [his] supervisors” either, stated:

Different people treat you differently. Everyone was professional ... some colleagues weren’t nice to me, probably because I was a foreigner... but people whose decisions mattered were nice.

Finally, Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan, also felt like she “was always treated nicely” by her employers when she was an F-1 student. In fact, she said that it was not until she became a U.S. citizen and took up a volunteering role “at a homeless shelter” that she felt what it was like to be mistreated for the first time:

I was volunteering for a homeless shelter, and I was fired from this ‘job’ because I was trying to educate homeless women to exercise independence and self-advocacy skills. I was told to go and find an opportunity to do that elsewhere, as this was not what was expected from me.

**Mixed feelings.** Not all student participants could say with confidence that their employer treated them in a 100% positive way, yet they also did not think that they had experienced any forms of serious mistreatment. Therefore, it is safe to say that those
individuals, 16% of the respondents, had mixed feelings about their employers’ attitudes towards them.

For example, Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, always worked for cash when he was a student, but his employers “never even knew of [his] status …, it didn’t matter to them,” so Zack said that this was the reason why he had probably never been discriminated against his status. However, at one job, Zack did experience “unreasonable working hours, schedule-wise” and almost unbearable “working conditions” when he had to “work under the metal roof in a 110 degree heat with no A/C.” Zack felt like his employer thought that he was “doing [him] a favor” and wanted him to “comply.” So, Zack simply ended up transferring to a different employer and did not hold any grudges.

Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, only got paid “$1,000 for the entire year” by her OPT employer, for whom she had worked tirelessly day and night. However, Mirah did not feel like she was necessarily mistreated overall, as that experience had played a major role in her personal and professional development:

My employer ... had a million dollar budget, and I was paid only $1,000 for the entire year. Thinking a $1,000 was everything I was worth for the entire year, was saddening. I wonder if my employer’s daughter did that, worked for free for an entire year, would it be ok? That would be an investigative story ... but overall, I regarded the experience as a positive one and it provided me with ... numerous opportunities.

Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, was also thankful to his employer for the opportunity, but he did not think that his job was entirely fulfilling and that he rarely had a say in what project he would be actually interested to work on. Caleb, who used to work as a GA at the school he was currently attending, said that his ever-changing supervisors would “just put [him] here and there and tell [him] what to do.” Caleb did not like some of the assignments given to him, as they were either “not very demanding” or simply “not interesting,” but he still
managed to find the positive side of those situations by stating that when projects were
terrible, he actually found himself being more motivated “to focus on [his] studies.” “That’s a
paradox!”, Caleb laughed.

Peter, former F-1 student from India, stated that he had never felt any sort of
mistreatment from his employer, despite having had worked under-the-table “for a major
finance company” for over four years, a job that he had found “through a loophole …, a
recruiter who never asked [him] for a work permit.” However, when the “whole E-Verify
happened” and Peter “lost his job,” he “felt like crap.” “It was hard to find work for cash,”
and it was “stressful” for Peter when his employer, who had never worried about his status
before and had regarded him as an excellent employee, fired him on the spot due to the E-
Verify law. Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, also got “kicked out” by the company he
had worked for over three years because his employer “didn’t want to sponsor [him] for a
work visa.” But otherwise, he “was treated fine” by that employer. Richard’s other employer,
however, did not treat him as well as the first one because “they knew [he] needed a legal
status,” and, therefore, made Richard “settle for a tiny salary” in exchange for their
sponsorship of his H-1B visa.

Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, did not experience any sort of mistreatment at
her two on-campus jobs, however she felt that having to “mop the floors … for a minimum
wage … was really degrading.” Yet, she did not have a choice. Tina had originally come to
the United States on an F-1 visa and brought her family with her: a spouse and two minor
children who were issued F-2 visas as dependents of an F-1 principal visa holder. Tina took
all her savings with her ($40,000) and upon arrival had to immediately “pay 9,000 dollars for
[her] family’s health insurance,” buy a car for her husband, and pay for rent and other
expenses. “Within half a year we spent it [$40,000] all. That’s how we became really poor,” Tina sobbed. Although Tina did not think that she was necessarily being mistreated by her employers, the fact that she had to work for free for two months for a company as a condition for eventually getting hired there, was by no means a fair treatment. But since it was hard to get any type of job off campus, Tina said that “she couldn’t really complain.”

**Cases of employer mistreatment.** All but one student participants (six total) who reported harassment, discrimination or any other form of mistreatment experienced at the hand of their employer, worked in the United States without proper work authorization. Even though out of the total of 38 student participants, 14 (37%) admitted to having had worked without proper work authorization, only five of them reported mistreatment. The six student respondents who shared stories of employer mistreatment, worked in one or both of the following industries: hospitality and childcare. All were young women. And here are their stories.

**Celine’s story.** Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, who originally entered the United States on a B1/B2 tourist visa to reunite with her boyfriend and who later adjusted her nonimmigrant status to F-1, “was mistreated so many times” that she “c[ould]n’t even count.” Celine had worked at several restaurants throughout her journey as an F-1 student. Her first job was at a “café,” where she was “harassed by [her] Arabic bosses” who would “invite [her] to go out with them all the time” and who “paid [her] cash … every two weeks.” Celine shared that one time her employers decided not to give her an earned paycheck at all; moreover, one of those employers was constantly stealing her tips:

> One time they paid me $300 instead of $600 … They stole my money! And there was no way for me to prove it. You can’t complain. You are not supposed to be working anyways .... He [my boss] was stealing my tips too! I worked 40 hours a week making $600 cash every two weeks … It was terrible …, I wanted to leave so many times .... I
didn’t know anything about babysitting, so I could not do that ..., so I stayed .... Later ...
my boyfriend moved ..., he was a mover, ... this manager at a restaurant, and he
[the manager] was like ‘thank you so much, here’s my card, call me if you need
anything’. So, my boyfriend called him when I needed a job .... Friends at school,
mostly from Brazil, also connected me with all these other ... bullshit ... under-the-
table jobs.

Today, Celine was a permanent resident with a master’s degree in Environmental
Sustainability from a prestigious U.S. university. Nonetheless, Celine was still stuck working
in the hospitality industry because she could not find a job in her field of study. All those
years spent working at restaurants did not help her resume. As she continued job hunting,
employers looked for experience, and Celine has “nothing to show.” As we were talking, 31-
year-old Celine was twirling her beautiful black hair that had many grey strands in it. She felt
pessimistic about her future.

Charlize’s story. Similarly, Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, who had
initially entered the United States on a J-1 Work and Travel visa to reunite with her boyfriend
and who had later adjusted her nonimmigrant status to F-1, worked at several restaurants
before she was able to apply for CPT and gain employment of professional nature:

I found a Lebanese place in [X-City in New England] and told them that I didn’t have
a social security number. The ... 60 year-old ... Greek guy must have wanted to sleep
with me or something, so he agreed to hire me under-the-table. He had an
accountant, and I worked under his social security number. I worked as a bartender
and waitress there .... Then I found an Italian restaurant ... in [X-Neighborhood of X-
City in New England] and worked for cash. Then I found a job at an upscale
restaurant and ended up deciding to use my social security number ... I was like, fuck
it, I’ll use my social. I need the money.

Charlize was struggling to make money when she worked at a Lebanese and an Italian
restaurant under-the-table. There was no stable income, and constant uncertainty was
frustrating, but, just like Celine, who just kept quiet because she was not “supposed to be
working anyways” (Celine), Charlize would also put up with it because she “wasn’t supposed to work”:

*It sucked because when it was slow, they’d tell you to go home, and you were counting on that money …. The uncertainty was bad …. Especially in the winter, it was tough because it wasn’t busy …. I mean, they were not obligated to treat me well, I wasn’t even supposed to work … so it’s whatever.*

After Charlize had left her first employer [Lebanese Restaurant] and started working at an Italian restaurant, “after a while … they [Italian Restaurant] fired [her] because they weren’t busy”: “They sort of screwed me over …, and I was like, what should I do now?”, Charlize disclosed. Charlize found herself homeless as she was no longer able to pay rent, so she ended up moving in with her new boyfriend that she had just met; and that cycle continued:

*I felt helpless like fuck! I even almost got a job posing naked to a photographer. I survived by moving from one boyfriend’s house to the next, then sleeping on someone’s couch.*

When Charlize got a job at an “upscale restaurant” using her social security number, things got better as “it [employer] was corporate” and, therefore, was “a fair game”:

*The upscale restaurant had … flexible hours, and I made good money …, if you do good, you are treated better, you get better shifts …. Treat it as a video game. When you get tips … you want to go back.*

Charlize continued working for that employer for many years after becoming a permanent resident and later, a U.S. citizen. She found it fulfilling at that time. Today, however, having had drastically switched gears, Charlize was an entrepreneur working for herself and running her own business. Charlize was proud of the person she had become and felt accomplished.

*Kat’s story.* Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, had originally entered the United States on an F-1 visa after her father, a U.S. citizen, told her to come on a nonimmigrant visa so that he could then apply for his daughter’s permanent residency via adjustment of status as an immediate family member. Soon after Kat’s arrival, however, the father changed his mind
and disappeared, leaving his daughter to figure out how to survive on her own. Kat did not have enough money saved up to live independently, so she had to find a job:

I was just walking ... exploring my surroundings, and I ended up in a place looking for people. I stopped by a chocolate store to buy chocolates and got offered a job. I told them I couldn’t work because I was an international student, but they said, ‘we’ll figure it out’.

At first, Kat thought that she “got lucky,” but as the time went by, she realized that she was never paid on time as compared to her U.S.-citizen-colleagues, and in addition, the money they paid her was not enough to cover her ever-increasing expenses:

They definitely took advantage of me. I would always get delays in payments, and I was like, ok, I’m not supposed to work anyways .... Then I realized it was messed-up, and I quit.

By that time, Kat had already graduated from her school with a Medical Assistant Certificate, and since that was a non-degree program, Kat did not have an option to stay in the United States on an OPT. Her father was still nowhere to be found, so Kat became undocumented.

After Kat quit her first employer, she ended up finding a job at a jewelry store where she was also treated unfairly:

My boss took advantage of me. He made me work overtime all the time. He knew I couldn’t do anything because I was undocumented ... but I also knew his weak points, so he couldn’t really do much.

Despite the mistreatment and her undocumented status, Kat remained strong and did not let anything break her optimistic spirit:

The thing is ... I was never afraid to take risks cause I wasn’t afraid to go back .... I was never afraid to be myself. I did read a lot about the laws, so I knew what they could do and what they couldn’t. In the end of the day, I wasn’t running away from a war.
Kat was now happily married to a U.S. citizen, whom she had dated for many years prior to their wedding. Kat now also had her green card and held a great job that she was very happy with.

*Abigail’s story.* Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia who had originally entered the United States on a J-1 Au Pair visa to “make money … babysitting … and to go to school in the U.S.,” ended up finding herself “working over-time for almost no money”:

> My host family sponsored my F-1 because I had to leave and couldn’t extend the Au Pair visa anymore. So, we made a deal. I babysit, they pay for my school. So, since I’m considerate, I picked the cheapest school, so they didn’t have to pay too much … When they helped me with an F-1 status adjustment, I felt trapped.

Abigail worked day and night while going to school full-time because she felt like she had no other choice: “I felt like a slave. I suffered so much working 95 hours a week babysitting. I cried.” Abigail shared that she “couldn’t afford anything” and that her host family would only pay her “30 dollars a week, which was just enough for gas to get from [her] host family’s place to school.” Nevertheless, Abigail persevered and graduated with an MBA. She ended up finding a great job in the field of project management, where she now felt truly valued.

*Leila’s story.* Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, who entered the United States on an F-1 visa, also had some stories of employer mistreatment to share. One place in particular, a small retail store, was “terrible”:

> This fat Greek guy would just talk shit about his wife all day long. Why? Why do I have to deal with it? …. He installed a camera and focused it on my boobs and my legs, and other parts …. When I found out about it, I quit, and he never paid me for my last two weeks …. I actually left showing him [the employer] my middle finger …. If I weren’t an F-1 student, I would have sued him …. But I couldn’t do anything at that time. I wasn’t supposed to work.
After Leila quit the store, she found other jobs under-the-table. She worked in retail and also waited tables at several restaurants. Some employers, typically bigger or well-known chains, treated her well; smaller businesses, on the other hand, had the tendency to abuse their power. Leila felt like she had no voice, no rights, and often felt insecure:

You feel like nothing, like shit, angry ..., like what da fuck! Who has the right to treat me like that??? But I couldn’t open my mouth ..., I felt like I didn’t have the right to open my mouth. Even though everyone says that America is a country of free speech, I didn’t feel that I had that freedom.

Fortunately, everything worked out for Leila in the end. At her school, Leila ended up meeting a wonderful mentor at the International Students’ office, who offered her an assistantship at his department, knowing that she was majoring in Student Affairs and Higher Education. Leila looked like a perfect fit for the role and took that opportunity with enthusiasm.

Gina’s story. Before Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, became eligible for CPT, she worked under-the-table as a nanny, yet she did not think that she was being mistreated by the kids’ family, even though she admitted to “sometimes [not being paid] enough.” Nevertheless, she “did not care much … because the family was already giving her a place to stay and a car.” Things were different with her other employers, however, with whom she did her two CPTs. At her first CPT job at a golf club, she “almost got raped,” and “no one cared,” so she “quit.” And at her second job at [X-Hotel in New England], Gina had been continuously taken advantage of for being a “new employee”:

My boss never wanted to work, so I was the new person who worked double shifts .... Then ... I started doing even more hours, so about 100 hours a week .... Usually, you have to work eight hours a day, but I worked 20 hours, covering all three shifts .... I was a nobody .... So, I worked, even though I didn’t have to .... I got so sick, I lost so much weight because of so much work .... I talked to the manager, and he like threw food coupons at me, and it felt like ... not ok.
Gina noticed that her boss also treated her differently because she was “the only Latina” on staff:

She [boss] treated her fellow Americans differently than me because I was a Latina ... my boss always thought I was doing things wrong .... One day my grandma passed away and I called in ... and ... wasn’t given permission to skip work even though the week before, my American co-worker’s mother died and she [boss] gave her the entire week off .... She was nice to all Americans and not to me. She’d call everyone ‘sweetheart’, ‘honey’, but not me ... we were fighting every day.

Despite all the difficulties she had encountered, Gina, who had graduated with an Associate degree in Hospitality Management from [X-Community College in New England], was now happily married to her U.S.-citizen boyfriend and held a management-level job at a different hotel, where she felt safe and protected.

**Second source stories of employer mistreatment.** Several students indicated that even though they themselves had never been mistreated by their employers, they knew about cases where it had happened to their fellow international students. For example, Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, said that his “friends experienced that [mistreatment]”:

*My roommate worked at 7/11, and he [the employer] would only give him overnight shifts, paying only nine dollars an hour because there were no inspections during the night.*

Jaden, an F-1 student from India, also “kn[e]w a lot of people who work[ed] for cash and under-the-table,” and “heard of some bad experiences,” however he judged them for taking those jobs because, as he explained, “F-1 visa’s for students, not for work.”

**Relation of F-1 workers’ experiences to their long-term career goals.** Did student participants think that working in the United States while being in an F-1 status would help them achieve their long-term career goals? All 38 students’ responses were unanimously affirmative. As Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, and Ash, former F-1 student from India, neatly summarized:
Even if you don’t work in your field of study, you can still meet people who work in your field ... or meet someone in general .... Directly, ... you make money, but indirectly, ... you have an opportunity to network. (Meaghan)

No matter what the position is, you learn from every position. And work experience always helps your resume. (Ash)

Now, whether student participants thought that their actual work experiences, regardless of being major-related or not, were going to help them in their long-term careers, or whether they were a complete waste of time, was an entirely different question.

Only a few students who ended up undertaking the jobs outside of their field of study, thought that by no means their jobs were going to help them succeed in their career. Most student participants, however, regarded their experiences despite them being non-related to their career aspirations. Student respondents shared that their work experiences “humbled” them, taught them “transferable soft skills,” helped with a “resume,” gave them an opportunity to “learn English,” gave them a chance to “interact with people,” made them feel “appreciated,” helped them “gain experience,” and “build character.” And all of the respondents who managed to find work in their field of study, reported a high level of satisfaction with their jobs, as those experiences enabled them to ultimately move up in their careers. For example, Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey majoring in Finance, after having worked for years as an engineer in his home country, was a “career changer” and said that “if [he] didn’t have his internships, [he] would not know how to do anything in practice.” Or Peter, former F-1 student from India, who said that “that’s how [he] got all of [his] experience working in finance.”

Ultimately, despite all of the hurdles that came along with international students’ job seeking strategies, places of employment, nature and scope of jobs undertaken, employer treatment experiences, and so on, the overall finding was that the student respondents
predominately had no regrets about trying to work while in an F-1 status. Work made them stronger, more confident, taught them a variety of skills, and had an enormous influence on their personal development.

**Employment-Related Immigration Policies: Voices of F-1 Students**

All but three student respondents (92%) expressed dissatisfaction with the current policies related to employment rights of international F-1 students in the United States. The three respondents (8%) who did not express negative or otherwise any views about the policies were 1) Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, who came from a wealthy family and was now going to school in the United States simply because his parents told him to:

*I don’t notice them [immigration regulations]. I don’t know them. I don’t care. I am usually told what to do. I’m not interested to learn.*

2) Maya, former F-1 student from Russia, who was pulled out of her stable job in her home country as a Dean and Professor by the admissions office in the United States, begging her to come to their school to do an MBA for free, and who said that she did not have an opinion about current immigration regulations and knew “nothing,” And 3) Morris, an F-1 student from Morocco, who stated that the rules were out there for a reason:

*I understand the U.S immigration policies regarding international students not being able to work off campus. Their main priority should be school.*

Every single other student respondent, however, had negative views on the immigration policies that were in place for F-1 students with regard to their employment rights. Conversations about current immigration policies were by far the longest and most emotional ones during my interviews with student participants. Popular key terms related to student participants’ views on the current policies included those that could be referred to one of the following analytical levels: macro – addressing global issues, meso – addressing
politics of the United States and its formal organizations, such as companies and universities, and micro – addressing individual problems.

Macro-level key terms: human rights violations; illegal work and socio-economic insecurity; system jeopardizing the freedoms of students; lack of financial security; policies harming students; America’s loss; United States shooting itself in the foot with respect to the global race for talent; lose-lose situation; inequality; policies being confusing yet purposeful; flawed ideology, etc.

Meso-level key terms: United Stated being protective and paranoid; United States being scared of immigrants; U.S. government sucking international funds through education; United States juicing students; Trump; unreasonable restrictive policies; laws working against international students; broken system; United States losing money by not collecting taxes from the underground economy; immigration system prohibiting American experience; closed door for foreign students; companies benefitting from students; high tuition costs; receiving no help from universities; an assumption that international students are rich, etc.

Micro-level key terms: limited on-campus jobs; limited practical training; low-skilled jobs; limited job opportunities; no pathways towards citizenship; no chance of getting papers; students being doomed to only be spending, not earning; lack of stability; fear; survival; challenge; anxiety; frustration; suffering; no financial aid; having to work hard to succeed; having no one to help; small chance to succeed, etc.

The next two subsections cover dissatisfied student participants’ views on the current policies as well as their suggestions on what they would want to change if given the power.

**What is wrong with the policies.** So, what did the student respondents think was specifically wrong with employment-related policies outlined by the U.S. government for
international F-1 students? The vast majority of student respondents who were dissatisfied with the policies thought that it was unfair that they did not allow international students to work off campus without having to seek an authorization from their schools. Some respondents simply did not understand how the policies made any sense at all; others tried looking at them through the eyes of American citizens and still could not figure out how they were beneficial for anybody. Many participants were concerned with the fact that the policies were intentionally designed to use F-1 students’ money to grow the economy to then only kick international students out when they were no longer useful. Themes of human rights violations, unauthorized work with all of the insecurities it fostered, inequality, inadequacy of on-campus work regulations, and many other came up during our conversations. I hereby group them into more narrow categories with an attempt to present the full scope of the views on the policies shared with me by the student participants.

**Inadequacy of on-campus work regulations.** According to 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9), F-1 international students may generally, with a few exceptions, only work on campus in cases of non-study-related employment. On-campus employment must not exceed 20 hours a week while school is in session (8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i)). Seven student respondents (18%) identified that such policy was inadequate to the actual needs of F-1 students. For example, Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, thought that on-campus employment rules sounded like a “joke”:

*A lot of people come here to get a master’s degree and have work experience. What, they are going to work on campus? What are they, kids?... And schools don’t really promote those to you, they don’t encourage you to apply cause they know it’s almost impossible to get those.*

Other student participants were of the same opinion as Tatiana with regard to how limited on-campus opportunities were: “On-campus jobs are great and all …, but the campus is SO
small and jobs are SO limited!” (Bina, F-1 student from Tanzania). On-campus jobs are “even more competitive … because everybody [F-1 students] wants to work [on campus] because they can” (Alexandra, F-1 student from Germany).

Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, confirmed that notion by stating the following: “All [on-campus] positions are full.” Gina shared that when she was looking for a job on campus, she was told to “wait and blah-blah-blah.” Gina did not understand how she was supposed to wait when she needed to “pay for school now!” In addition to being competitive, on-campus employment regulation for F-1 students was criticized for being limited with regard to the number of permitted work hours. “I’m against the limitations for on-campus employment only being 20 hours a week,” Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, asserted. Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, concurred: “Schools do allow students to work on campus, but for a limited number of hours, and there are also not many vacancies.” Similarly, Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, thought that 20 hours a week was definitely not enough:

_On campus, you should be able to work more than 20 hours. These jobs don’t even require you to do anything, you can just do your homework. Why limit them?_

Ultimately, the general view on the on-campus employment policy for F-1 students was that it was “pretty good” (Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan), but “if you can’t get a job there … then the policies are obviously not supportive” of F-1 students who want or else need to work “to support [their] well-being” (Zack).

_Inadequacy of CPT regulations._ CPT is a practicum, internship, or any other similar activity that is either required to be undertaken by one’s academic program of study in order to obtain the degree or is taken for an academic credit that counts towards their degree (8 CFR 214.2 (f)(10)(i)). Five student participants (13%) thought that the CPT program was by
no means perfect. For example, Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, thought that
despite seeing why internships could be “valuable because of the experience that you get,”
they were still quite limited in terms of how many of those international students actually had
the legal right to undertake: “You can only do one or two internships. That’s upsetting,”
Santiago admitted. Similarly, Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, regarded “practical
training” as “limited” because it was designed for “academic” purposes, “not for survival.” In
addition, she said that CPTs had a limited time span and were “hard to get.”

When Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, became eligible for CPT, she found a
great internship opportunity in her field of study. However, later, she found out that in order
to be able to work there legally, she had to “register for the CPT as if it was a class,” and
“one credit [was] 560 dollars.” So, if she were to do this CPT through an independent study
class, she would have to pay for three credits. Therefore, since the internship was not even a
paid position, Meaghan was “forced to volunteer” to save money. Bianca, former F-1 student
from Honduras, was also upset with the fact that so many internships under CPT were
unpaid: “It would be nice if international students had the opportunity to get paid internships
in their area of studies,” Bianca admitted. Finally, Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia,
who gained all of her “practical skills” from an under-the-table job at a pizzeria exclaimed
that CPTs were “impossible to get!” She added: “Employers are scared of your legal status
and limitations. I don’t know a single person who worked on CPT!”

**Inadequacy of OPT regulations.** OPT is an option for international students to gain
practical experience outside of their curriculum. This type of training is different from CPT
as it does not require students to register for any classes and is not a part of an academic
program (DHS, 2013). Some students had negative views about OPT. For example, Anya,
former F-1 student from Moldova, thought that “one year of OPT [wa]s useless and not helpful.” Anya came up with her own definition for the program, and although she was laughing when she shared that definition with me, Anya remembered how it was not at all funny back in the day:

*I’ll give you the definition of OPT. OPT is – you graduate, and the government basically gives you some time to pack your bags. OPT is the time for you to pack your bags. That’s what it really is!*

Derek, former F-1 student from China, thought that OPT was not long enough and that it prioritized STEM students:

*The government wants to control STEM program because they NEED them, so they loosen policies for them, but for everyone else, not.*

Derek was not happy with the fact that for his major, Finance, OPT policies did not provide any extensions to his F-1 status, as it was the case for international students majoring in STEM fields. He also did not like the fact that he was not allowed to “work in a broader field” and was forced to seek employment that was “tied to [his] major.” “I don’t know why there are so many restrictions,” Derek sighed. “You shouldn’t limit people with knowledge who can contribute to the country,” he added.

*Overlooking financial insecurity.* As evidenced in the analysis of the participants’ earlier responses, financial need was one of the main drivers for students who had chosen to work during their F-1 journeys. For some, the need to earn money was a matter of survival, for others – it was simply about being able to make some extra money and becoming more independent from their families. Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, expressed her frustration with current employment restrictions because for her, being able to earn money was the means of survival:
When it comes to surviving, income is a way of surviving. People who have no income ... are desperate. I have a baby, and I don’t have work authorization .... I have a baby, and I’m living on food stamps! ... If I could work off campus, it would be so much easier for me. I’d be able to make some money to take better care of my child .... GA-ship doesn’t cover your life.

Abigail echoed that “even being able to work at MacDonald’s,” would give people who needed an opportunity to make extra income a chance to “simply buy things for themselves.” Similarly, Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, thought that international students should be allowed to work for any employer off campus “at least part-time” because “educational … and other expenses [we]re too high for students to afford without being employed at the same time.”

Even those student participants who never had any financial struggles while in F-1 status, agreed that restrictive employment policies were not inclusive of students who did not originate from well-off families. For example, Ash, former F-1 student from India whose family supported him throughout his entire F-1 journey, knew that there were “many people out there who d[i]dn’t have a lot of financial support” and who “need[ed] money” to survive. As a side note, Ash thought that “th[o]se restrictions [we]re a little bit focused on the people who c[a]me from money.”

**Disadvantaging U.S. businesses and economy; advantaging U.S. universities.**

Restrictive employment-related immigration policies put the country’s economy at a disadvantage when businesses are unable to hire F-1 students due to numerous limitations, or when those students are forced to enter the underground economy. However, international students bring undeniable value to U.S. universities through billions of dollars in tuition (NAFSA, 2019) as well as other, non-tangible contributions, such as those related to schools’ internationalization and diversification strategies.
Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, stated that current policies were not only preventing F-1 students from gaining meaningful employment, but were also “hindering … companies to benefit from international students.” She was discontent with the fact that the U.S. policies did not allow “agencies, organizations, and other companies to basically take this talent [international students] and utilize it.” “Companies should be deciding who to hire, not the government, not the schools,” Alexandra concluded. Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, echoed Alexandra by stating that “if there is a need, there should be a legal opportunity to do it,” arguing that if companies want to hire international students for their skills, they should be able to do so without having to deal with immigration restrictions imposed on those potential workers.

Derek, former F-1 student from China majoring in Finance, was baffled by the fact that the U.S. government did not see the simplicity of the ‘more jobs = bigger economy’ formula:

*Government is concerned with the local people’s jobs because of the foreign work force …. At least make policies more accessible to international students who receive their higher education in the U.S. …, if they work … they contribute to the society … they bring up the GDP!*  

Peter, former F-1 student from India, who also majored in Finance, like Derek, thought that the major flaw of the current restrictive policies was that they so vividly disadvantaged the U.S. economy. “Students find ways to work anyways, but they are not paying taxes,” Peter stated. “I didn’t pay taxes. It was all cash when I worked,” he continued. Peter concluded:

*Now, imagine, if I had a permit to work and didn’t have to go this route, I’d be paying taxes and benefitting economy. Instead, I didn’t.*

Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, echoed Peter when she said that international students who were “working illegally” were not “paying taxes to the U.S. government.” “But
they could!”, she added. Charlize also noted that not only the U.S. government was losing money from all of the unpaid taxes by students, but from the taxes that employers were not paying as a result of hiring international students under-the-table as well. Charlize simply could not understand why the United States did not see how “if this whole tax evasion situation was not happening,” the country would be able to “use all of that tax money to pay for its internal and external debts.”

Several students were determined that the only actual beneficiaries of the current employment-related immigration policies outlined for F-1 students, were, in fact, U.S. universities. “Academia is a very big business,” Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, noted. Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, stressed that the policies were “clearly unfair for students,” but were definitely “good for universities.” Upton, former F-1 student from Turkey, elaborated on this notion further by stating that despite all of the financial benefits that international students brought to the U.S. universities, no one at those schools was interested in helping F-1 students to get jobs. “It would be nice if universities were placing us into internships …, especially in the summer,” Upton said. “No one helps you … no career office helps you,” Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, echoed. Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso concurred: “It’s a hard mission, but you are on your own.” And Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, even had a conspiracy theory about how the U.S. education system was purposefully constructed in a way that “allow[ed] flexible schedule” and, therefore, “laid the foundation for students to exercise choices where they C[OULD] work” yet legally were not allowed to, which was paradoxical.

Yielding to other countries in the global race for talent. An opportunity to gain work experience is becoming one of the most important drivers of student mobility worldwide, and
many countries begin to realize that policies governing students’ ability to work, have a
direct connection to the number of international students they receive (Farrugia, 2016).
Nevertheless, the U.S. employment-related policies for F-1 students remain being restrictive.
These policies “are pretty limiting for a capitalist society,” Zayden, former F-1 student from
Burkina Faso, suggested. “With Trump, we now have less and less students wanting to come
to America,” Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan, noted. “America is losing talent to
other countries,” she added. Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, echoed Stella and
stated that “the U.S. [wa]s shooting itself in the foot with th[o]se policies.” Alexandra was
frustrated with how the Unites States was just “spitting out very talented people” instead of
trying to “put … that pool of talent … into employment.” And Celine, former F-1 student
from Colombia, was in agreement with that notion:

_The world is getting competitive … countries can’t keep talent if they don’t allow
international students to work. After you finish study, everyone knows that work is the
most important. It has to be easy._

Aware of employment restrictions for international students studying in the United
States, Ash, former F-1 student from India, had originally “wanted to go to Australia …
because [he] knew about all th[o]se limitations,” but Ash’s dad wanted him to go to the
United States, justifying his opinion by telling Ash that he could “make more money there
[the United States].” In addition, Ash’s sister had studied in the United States, another reason
why his dad insisted on him going to college there. “But she got married to a Brit” and “now
lived in England,” Ash noted. Similarly, Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, who ended up
in the United States because she followed her husband, had also known about the restrictions.
If given a choice, Bina would have had gone to Canada:
If you go to Canada, you can have it so easy to get permanent residency and be able to work, especially with a PhD. Why are they [Canada] able to do that and America can’t?

Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, also could not understand why “students [we]re allowed to work part-time off campus in other countries, like Australia,” but could not do that in the United States. She was concerned that the U.S. employment restrictions could make “students hesitate about choosing the U.S. over other countries for study.”

Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, knew firsthand how different it was in the United States with regard to employment policies for international students, as he had been a student in Canada in the past. While studying in Canada, Nathan was not only allowed to work off campus “as a receptionist at a hotel,” making “15 dollars an hour,” but as a result of having completed “one master’s degree,” he got a Canadian “permanent residency.”

Meanwhile, in the United States, Nathan had already gotten “three master’s” and still had “nothing”:

America is losing a lot by not making it easy. We are committed people and want to work hard, to succeed and to also help people from home. So, the motivation is double and triple from us .... I got a permanent residency ... in Canada ...., but I still love America more.

Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam, knew exactly why employment policies were stricter in the United States than in other foreign-student-destination-countries:

In the U.S., there are already too many people who are smart, and so the U.S. is very arrogant because they know everyone wants to come here .... Canada and Australia are different. They are bigger, and less people want to go there.

And one respondent, Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, albeit being majorly discontent with current U.S. employment restrictions, thought that “some countries d[i]dn’t even have that,” having stated that maybe things were not “that bad” at the end of the day.
Preventing immigration; increasing fraud. Many student respondents who were dissatisfied with current employment policies explained that such policies were purposefully put in place by the U.S. government to prevent immigration. However, since pathways towards legal employment, especially at the end of the OPT period, were limited, international students were forced to seek other means of staying in the country, according to student respondents. For example, Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova, was furious with the fact that there were no immigration pathways for F-1 students:

> You spend so much time here, maturing here .... I can’t imagine going back and starting over. Especially when you come here young. So, you study, get a degree and then what? Go back and start everything from scratch? What’s the point? I wouldn’t want to do that. It would be nice to have a pathway towards citizenship.

Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, expressed almost identical emotion over this topic. She stated:

> You leave everything behind, and you set your goals, and you keep going until you can’t move forward anymore because of your visa status. I saved money towards the end of my OPT, and I considered going back to a good school in Colombia and go to a much better program for cheaper. But then I was like, I don’t even know where I am from anymore. My Spanish was no longer good. I’ve been here for so many years, I didn’t want to go back. I was depressed.

Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, also wished there was a clear pathway for F-1 students to be able to “legally work …, become legal to survive …, [and] not be afraid.” By not being afraid, Caleb meant not being afraid of being “deported” for something trivial, like “getting into a fight to defend [his] woman.” Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam, was also frustrated with the fact that it was so difficult to stay in the country to work upon the expiration of her OPT. “It was challenging to look for jobs because a lot of companies didn’t want to sponsor me,” Tess complained, having stated that anywhere from “80 to 90 percent of opportunities were not open to [her].”
Unfortunately, when the legal doors are closed for people who are determined to succeed and who want to stay and work in the country regardless of how difficult the journey might be, other doors open, or rather, they have to be unlocked through alternative methods. As Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, summarized: “It’s so hard to go through the legal routes … that’s why many people go through illegal routes.” The fact that there were no realistic pathways to stay in the United States legally, “always bothered” Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, “big time.” She elaborated:

> The only way to stay here is marriage. When LGBT marriage got approved, I was even considering marrying my girlfriend …. Even then, you have to pay those people you marry for papers, you still need the money for that …. I didn’t have that kind of money.

Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, had the same view about lack of pathways to stay in the country to work upon graduation:

> Marriage is the only way, we [international students] have to put up with people that we don’t love. There has to be a path to get a job. If the country is welcoming all these students, why not let them work? We are paying more taxes than any other students. We don’t take any money from the government, but we are giving the money TO the government!

Kruz, former F-1 student from Czech Republic, “worked a lot” and “worked extra hard to succeed” when he worked as a videographer through his CPT and OPT, to only find out that “there were no pathways to immigration in this country” and having to “seek alternative ways of getting [his] papers to finally be able to visit home.” And Charlize was more embittered by the fact that the laws themselves, albeit seemingly restrictive, were, in fact, implicitly encouraging of unauthorized labor. She thought that “the law” was not working as it had “many loopholes.” For example, Charlize stated that although she had worked at a restaurant without authorization for many years, with “dozens of I-9’s going through HR, not even once … the restaurant … got audited.”
Abetting unauthorized labor. Restrictive immigration policies are known to be resulting in increased vulnerability to exploitation and irregularity (Soova, 2015; Zetter & Ruaudel, 2016). It was evident from my conversations with student participants that current restrictions imposed on F-1 students’ rights to work off campus, created and even promoted, albeit indirectly, an avenue leading international students towards under-the-table jobs. As Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, neatly summarized:

There is a large number of students working illegally ... because international students are not allowed to work off campus .... The government and schools just push students into illegal labor market .... Some international students need money so much that they simply have to do illegal jobs, like smuggling iPhones or even money laundering.

Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, had realized that “there [wa]s definitely something wrong with the system” when she met a “friend from Japan,” a fellow F-1 student and a “talented professional,” who “worked as a ballet teacher and … also earned cash from other jobs on the side … because she needed money.” Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, did not understand the whole idea behind the off-campus work restrictions currently imposed on F-1 students either and shared a story of his friend who also had to find an under-the-table job:

I had a friend who worked illegally and got caught. And he had a scholarship, and he lost it because he was caught! If you have people so smart that you give them scholarships, and then you are limiting their right to work, you are limiting people who can’t afford living expenses, then ... what’s the point? .... International students are already here, and they are gonna be here for years. What is the value of limiting their job opportunities?

And Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, shared with me that due to the numerous limitations, she was forced to work without authorization. Luckily, however, she had a great experience:
At least when I worked illegally at a pizzeria while I was a student, I learned conversational English. This is what actually helped me get a job at [Major IT Company in the World]. You learn about mentality and work ethics. Also, everything is computerized at every job, so that gives you experience.

**Bolstering inequality; violating human rights.** Current immigration laws promote inequality in relation to opportunities available for international students versus their U.S.-citizen or permanent-resident peers. Furthermore, they do not allow international F-1 students to fully exercise their basic human right to work and free choice of employment per UDHR §23.1 (UNGA, 1948) and the right to development per the Declaration on the Right to Development [DTRD] §1.1 (UNGA, 1986).

**Inequality.** Several student respondents emphasized that the problem with current employment-related restrictive policies was the one of inequality. In their view, if F-1 students were not given the same rights as their American peers with regard to employment, then they should at least have the same tuition. In contrast, if tuition were to remain higher for international students than for U.S. citizens or permanent residents, then F-1 students should at least be given a chance to work to be able to afford that higher tuition more comfortably. “We just want to be the same,” Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, sighed:

*I know that citizens have rights because they are citizens, but international students should at least have the same tuition. I had to work under the table because the tuition was three times higher. So, if you don’t let us work, at least lower our tuition. We are not allowed to work, but our tuition is triple. We chose this country to study. At least let us pay the same as Americans …. Let us work for at least 20 hours off campus. We are not Americans, we are not asking for the same rights, but something at least. I think that’s fair. Give us a chance to work part-time, and that way it will make it easier.*

Daniel, an F-1 student from Indonesia, expressed the same frustration with the policies by saying that “it should be an equal competition”:

*In my opinion [the policies are] too tough because I feel like we pay shit tons of money for tuition, and we pay taxes, and I think we deserve the right to work, just like*
other Americans .... I get the whole ‘citizens first’ idea, but it’s not like we are trying to steal your jobs!

Similarly, Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, said that it really bothered her that international students were “already paying three times more” yet were not allowed to work to “recover some of that money.” Abigail exclaimed: “Why can’t we work at like 7/11 or something?! … At least we’d not only be spending, but also earning.”

Work as a human right. Some student respondents thought that current F-1 employment policies were violating human rights, specifically one’s right to work and free choice of employment. “When it comes to human rights, U.S. is not there,” said Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania. “I contribute to this country, I pay taxes … why can’t I have the freedom to work?”, Bina wondered. In addition, she touched upon another human rights issue articulated in UDHR §25.2 (UNGA, 1948) that in her particular case, was directly tied to one’s right to work. As a mother of a U.S. citizen child, she wished she had more support from the U.S. government, as per UDHR §25.2, “motherhood and childhood [we]re entitled to special care and assistance”:

I wish policies were more lenient, especially to people who have American children. If I don’t have money to feed this child and take care of his health, and he is a U.S. citizen, how is it ok? They don’t see it from this perspective. Trump calls them anchor babies .... That’s not what I expected at all from America .... When it comes to the issue of human rights ... [Sigh]... that’s a larger conversation.

“Policies are a violation of human rights,” Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, concurred. In his opinion, current policies prevented students from working and as a result, fostered a much bigger issue of unauthorized labor. “You see a lot of people working illegally because there is a demand for it,” Braden admitted. And for Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, the human rights violation issue was by far the most obvious one in relation to
current employment restrictions outlined for international students by the U.S. government.

“Work is a human right,” Caleb stated assertively, “it’s just that simple.”

*Work as a necessary tool for development.* The human right to development “implies full realization of the rights of peoples to self-determination” per DTRD §1.2 (UNGA, 1986), with participation in and contribution to one’s economic development being one of the aspects of that self-determination. Work was perceived by several student respondents as something more than just a way of making a living. For example, Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, expressed anger with how the restrictive policies influenced even those international students who did not necessarily need the money to support their financial well-being:

*International students who are wealthy ..., they are partying and doing drugs. Why? Because they have nothing else to do. But if they could work, then they’d be more responsible .... It’s not about just making money .... You want to keep your mind busy, be productive .... Work would give students an opportunity to interact with other people ... and practice English .... I think most people that I know would have loved to work while students.*

Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, was of the same opinion. Even though Rachael did not need to work since her government had sponsored her entire tuition and other education-related expenses, she still wished she “had more opportunities to work” and preferred that “the policies were more flexible.” Rachael admitted that she had “always wanted to work at like a beauty salon or Starbucks” to keep her mind busy, make some extra cash and develop as a person. Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, also confirmed that some F-1 students simply “want to be independent … and make their own living by earning money by themselves” instead of having to continuously rely on their parents for financial support.
Wrongful assumptions and flawed ideology. Restrictiveness of the U.S. immigration policies has been continuously justified by economic and political circumstances (Massey, 1999; Meyers 2004; Timmer & Williams, 1998). However, empirical data collected during this study, showed that such justifications were most certainly built on illegitimate assumptions about international students as well as senseless generalizations that stemmed out of entirely flawed ideologies.

F-1 students are rich. One of the biggest assumptions about F-1 students, according to several student respondents, was the widespread belief that all international students came from wealthy families. “It’s just an assumption that you are rich when you come here as a student,” Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia noted. Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, who never even had a choice to come to the United States when he was brought as an H-4 dependent of his H-1B-visa-holder-father and was then forced to adjust his status to F-1 to be able to go to college, also stressed that just because you were an F-1 student, did not at all mean you had a lot of money:

Theoretically, if you are coming here to study, you should have money .... Now, if you are here, and you are stuck in the F-1 status, and you are forced to go with that status, then how are you supposed to survive without having to work?

Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, agreed with the notion of misalignment between the public assumption and reality. However, she also thought that there was, in fact, a particular geographic stratum of international students that, in her opinion, was rich:

They [U.S. government and society] think that we are rich, which kind of makes sense, but my situation is totally opposite. It’s hard to get a scholarship, loan, to even get into college, you don’t know the language very well .... I was working under the table .... American Dream is bullshit because your hands are tied .... The government thinks that we are rich, the reality is that it’s only a certain percent, the Asians, who are rich. The struggle is big, and nobody sees that.
F-1 students are stealing American jobs. The next biggest presumption was related to international students taking away jobs from U.S. citizens. Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, admitted that he understood why American citizens would not want international students to work. “They think that we are preventing Americans from getting jobs,” Braden chuckled. Similarly, Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, stated that “the government’s policy ha[d] its reasons for not allowing students to work,” that reason being to “to protect jobs for the natives.” Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, also had his argument hit the same direction, although with more specifics. Kalvin said that “white people [Americans]” were now pushing “local people to work in STEM fields” because there were “so many foreigners occupying IT jobs.” “Maybe that’s why the laws are so restrictive,” Kalvin wondered.

F-1 students are immigrants. Another assumption identified during my interviews with student participants, was that international students were economic migrants in disguise. “The country is now being so protective and paranoid … they are so scared of immigrants … that they create policies that make no sense,” Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, stated. Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, elaborated on that notion further:

Tons of students don’t want to stay here, they just want to experience the U.S. culture, and one of those experiences can be working at a restaurant. American immigration system prohibits the actual American experience ..., it limits people to get that experience.

Kruz, former F-1 student from Czech Republic, also wanted to demystify the notion about international students’ presumable feeling of entitlement in the light of their nonimmigrant status. “With regard to immigration, it all comes to your mindset … I’m not entitled to anything. I’m a foreigner …. I worked extra hard to succeed,” he said.
F-1 students are criminals. Protecting the border from criminals was another way for the U.S. government to justify its restrictive policies, according to some of the student respondents. “It’s unfortunate that the government makes it difficult for international students to work,” Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, sighed. Just because “one of the F-1’s was a terrorist … we are now all suffering,” she added. Jaden, an F-1 student from India, thought that the system was broken as well, and that there were “better ways of protecting American citizens” out there. However, he admitted that “ideologies have already been formed,” and people were “not even willing to consider change.” Jaden did think, however, that eventually, things were going to get better. As he explained, “it’s a generational thing …. Once they [people in power] retire, things are gonna get better.”

United States is a democracy. One student participant, Derek, former F-1 student from China, completely flipped the conversation about the assumptions that were potentially standing in the way of international students’ freedoms. Derek said he knew that everything that was happening with regard to immigration restrictions on international students’ employment, was purposeful and was a master plan carefully designed by the U.S. people in power:

It’s a controlled market. It’s actually like China. Even though U.S. is democracy, it’s not. In China, the price of the house goes up, Chinese government can control it. But in reality, the U.S. is no different. They are just doing it in a different way. They are regulating policies to regulate the market.

Derek’s focus was not on the flawed assumptions about international students potentially influencing the nature of current restrictive policies. On the contrary, he thought that the United States only pretended to be a democracy, when in reality, the entire immigration system was the country’s way of being in control.
Suggestions on what can be changed. As student participants addressed the barriers set in front of F-1 students by current employment-related immigration policies, they also shared some views on what needed to change and why. The vast majority of student respondents dissatisfied with current policies stated that if given the power to implement change, they would definitely remove all employment-related restrictions and allow F-1 students to work freely in the United States, for as many hours and for any employer as they pleased. Three student participants (8%) said that they would be satisfied if F-1 students could at least work part-time off campus, if not for an unlimited number of hours. And the other three respondents (8%) thought that although off-campus employment of any nature should be allowed, there should still be an hourly limit to such employment, ranging from 20 to 25 hours a week maximum. Those three respondents, however, wanted to eliminate the hourly limit currently set out by the policies for on-campus employment. They did not think that working 20 hours a week on campus was enough, and that on-campus employment should not have an hourly cap.

Other suggestions included allowing international students to take out loans in the United States; lowering their tuition to make it equal to what American students paid; eliminating CPT; prolonging OPT and removing its field-of-study-relation condition; increasing H-1B cap or eliminating it altogether; revamping the entire system, where F-1 students would automatically be awarded a work visa or else permanent residency upon graduation; making it mandatory for university staff and faculty to provide adequate employment-related assistance to F-1 students; creating more work-programs for international students with individual needs, as well as simply mirroring Canadian policies on student employment that were currently in place for their international students.
Off-campus employment: completely unrestricted. All but a few student participants who were discontent with current restrictive policies on employment rights of F-1 students, wanted to completely revamp the law and allow all F-1 students to freely participate in the U.S. labor market, without limitations on employment nature and number of work hours. “I would implement the ability to work off campus if i could,” said Zayden, former F-1 student from Burkina Faso. And so would Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, who said that if international students had “more opportunities to work” and “the policies were more flexible,” it would most definitely “increase [their] financial security” and give them a chance to “gain experience.” Peter, former F-1 student from India, thought the main reason why he would change the policies to those allowing unrestricted employment participation for international students, was because students would then be able to “legally work” and, therefore, “PAY taxes and not AVOID them fearing immigration persecution.” Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, supported Peter’s reasoning; she also thought that if international students could work without limitations, they would not be forced into precarious jobs and would actually “pay taxes … and be less stressed.”

Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, would allow international students to work without limitations because the new policy would finally align with the “actual demand” of the economy with its “five million openings in the jobs market.” Of the same exact view was Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan:

*It just makes sense to open the labor market to international students ... because there ARE jobs in America, and locals are not willing to work. International students are the most hard-working people, and there are PLENTY of jobs!*

Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam, who would also allow international students to work off campus without any restrictions if given a chance, stated that “if [she] could
change the policies, [she]’d change them.” However, she admitted that “even if [she] could change something, it wouldn’t be easy.” Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, also noted that if the laws were to change, then “it should be done well”:

If you let students work, there is not going to be less homeless people, but students might be tempted to not study. It’s a two-sides-of-a-coin situation. If we allow students to work, then we must have ... specific laws for that ..., otherwise America will ... just have a huge source of cheap and skilled labor ..., which might create a different issue.

Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, who would also “allow students to work off campus with no restrictions,” had some concerns about the unintended consequences the policy change could potentially create:

I would be cautious of the fake students who’d come here to abuse the system. We have to be mindful that there are always going to be those people who are going to abuse the system and jeopardize the freedoms of the genuine students.

Off-campus employment: at least part-time. Several student respondents stated that they would have felt satisfied if they could at least implement partial changes to the policies, giving international students an opportunity to work off campus without restrictions and without having to seek work authorization from their school or the USCIS, at least on a part-time basis. For example, James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, thought that international students “should be able to work at least part-time so that they can have extra cash.” James added that this was a reasonable suggestion “especially if you come from middle class.” He elaborated that if he had the opportunity to work off campus without having to deal with restrictive immigration policies, he would “have a better life, go to nice dinner …, buy better groceries.” Furthermore, James said that if he were able to legally work in the United States when he was an F-1 student, he would then “help the U.S. by paying taxes.” For James, it just made logical sense that international students should be allowed to work, as if they had
money, they would be able to “plan [their] life better.” Students could then just “work, … save money, … prove that [they] have money, … start credit, buy a car.” In that order.

Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, also wished that international students could at least be allowed to work part-time off campus. “At least 20 hours off campus” was seen as fair by Kat. Part-time off-campus employment also seemed like a fair deal to Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia. “Students should be allowed to work! At least part-time legally!”, she exclaimed, justifying her view by her concern with how current employment restrictions were putting international students into the underground economy due to high tuition costs and other never-ending and ever growing expenses.

**Unlimited on-campus hours but limited off-campus hours.** Several student respondents were all for removing the work restrictions currently imposed on international students, however they did not think that the free-for-all type policies were the best solution. For example, Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, said that “if [she] were the policy maker, [she]’d change that students would be allowed to work freely in the U.S. while studying,” however she admitted that she would still implement some limitations:

> I would probably cap the hours to 25 per week, or best leave it up to the university to decide because it really depends on the program. With some programs it’s simply impossible to work full-time.

Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, also thought that it was a good idea to allow international students to work off campus, but just not full-time. “Twenty hours a week is fair to be able to work off campus,” suggested Ian. “My friends in Europe all can work off campus,” he added. However, Ian absolutely wanted to eliminate the current on-campus employment policy with its 20-hours-per-week requirement, as he did not see how working on campus full-time could hurt anybody. In a similar fashion, Tina, an F-1 student from
Mongolia, expressed her concern with current limitations for on-campus work: “I’m against the on-campus-20-hours-a-week-only policy.” Tina thought that students should not have any hourly restrictions when working on campus, however she thought that “international students probably … shouldn’t be able to work 40 hours [off campus].” Tina thought that giving students an opportunity to work part-time off campus, without having to go through the CPT red tape or other restrictions, was a fair deal as that way, students could “have a professional job and develop professionally at the same time.”

**Loan opportunities; lowering tuition.** Some students admitted that they would have even settled for a policy change where international students were allowed to take out a loan to help them become more financially secure. “You can’t take a loan because of your status,” said Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan with frustration. Zack did understand the logic behind the current policies that did not allow international students to borrow money from U.S. banks. He explained: “Who’s gonna give you a loan if you can just take off?” However, Zack had a suggestion on how the new loan policy could be implemented. His proposition was to:

> [A]llow F-1 students to get a loan based on a condition that they are able to get a degree and get a green card and then repay the loan. You could structure a loan where there is no risk for the bank .... Why not? Depending on the economic cycle, you could either restrict or loosen those policies depending on the visa status. I would leverage the economic cycle into the argument.

Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, whose biggest frustration with the current policies was that they not only restricted off-campus work, but that the schools were charging international students “triple” tuition, stated that if she had the power to change anything, she would start with lowering F-1 students’ tuition. “America is juicing us! ... International students should have the same tuition as American students,” said Kat. Charlize, former F-1
student from Russia, echoed Kat and said that the fact that international students were
currently paying so much more in tuition than their U.S. peers, definitely “limited … these
young people … in their efforts to succeed and be able to cover all expenses.” Charlize added
that “there [wa]s no financial aid available for international students” and that it was
completely unfair. If she could change the policies, Charlize would not only expand the U.S.
labor market to international students but would also give them an opportunity to apply for
financial aid, “just like everyone else.”

**Involving universities; rebuilding programs.** Four student participants (10.5%) thought that change would have to start with academic institutions, which were direct liaisons
between international students and the U.S. government. For example, Daniel, an F-1 student
from Indonesia, wanted to see universities create a way in which international students could
“take better opportunities working in the U.S. without imposing on the U.S. citizens’ jobs.” If
given the power, Daniel would have created “some kind of program where Americans
wouldn’t see international students as competition.” In addition, Daniel wanted “academic
institutions … [to] further assist students to get jobs in the U.S. after graduation.” He was
dissatisfied with how international students were left “on [their] own” once they graduated,
and “it would be much easier to find jobs in the U.S. … with more help” from schools.

Upton, former F-1 student from Turkey, also thought that universities were not very
supportive of international students when it came to their job-searching needs. Upton would
“make it easier to find summer internships,” if given the power. He would “have universities
be more helpful in placing students to internships.” Moreover, he would have made
universities “guarantee summer internships” to international students through their programs
instead of leaving them to figure everything out on their own.
Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, would “build a criterion of some sort where students could work as a part of the program.” In addition, she wanted to see more programs where “students’ individual needs [we]re being addressed.” As a nonimmigrant student and a mother of a U.S. citizen, she felt like she could use a program that would make employment-related exceptions for “nontraditional” students, who could clearly use more understanding of their unique situations.

And Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, wished that schools were more considerate of the type of students they were currently filling their classrooms with. “The majority of business classes are filled by international students,” he said. Kalvin noticed that when it came to “business classes at school, white people [we]re not interested” in attending them because they were “more interested in finance.” But then, when international students were on the market for a “business job,” they would find themselves “competing with the white people” who they had never met and knew nothing about. Ultimately, Kalvin’s main concern was with the lack of diversity representation in classrooms that would mirror the real world; and that was something that he wished was different and that he would have liked to see change, given the power.

**CPT, OPT, H-1B: elimination or restructure.** A number of student participants would have tackled the work programs that were currently put in place for international students by the U.S. government, to potentially allow them a chance to obtain employment in their academic field of study either before or after graduation. Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, called those programs “an unfortunate situation.” She was especially discontent with the CPT policies, primarily because she had to pay for CPT as if it was a class in order to obtain work authorization from her DSO:
**CPT doesn’t make sense to me. I already have my I-20, why can’t I work? ... I would eliminate the payment for CPT ..., CPT itself, really. I don’t get the essence of it. I mean, internships should be so straightforward. It’s just frustrating.**

Derek, former F-1 student from China, made a funny joke about the study-related work programs: “They suck so much … like a vacuum … ha-ha-ha … I’d change them.” His proposition was to extend the duration of OPT for all, not just STEM, students and to also remove the “stupid” OPT regulation that required students to only undertake an OPT if it was related to their major. Derek did not understand why he could not take an accounting job just because his I-20 stated Finance as his major. Ultimately, if he could change anything to make international students’ life easier, Derek would have “ma[de] policies more accessible to international students who receive[d] their higher education in the U.S.”

Similarly, Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, expressed her honest opinion about the study-related programs: “They SUCK …, those policies are bullshit!” Bina would have increased the very limited number of H-1B slots currently being allocated to non-U.S. citizens or permanent residents by the USCIS on the annual basis. And Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, if given the power, would have eliminated the H-1B cap altogether. She justified the need to eliminate the H-1B cap by stating that it was “expensive … for small companies … to sponsor [international students] for H-1B,” and that even if those companies decided to do it anyways, H-1B application approval was still “not guaranteed” because of the “lottery.” Alexandra elaborated further:

> Big companies have money to hire and sponsor students ..., but non-profits and small companies are losing out big time ... with lottery. It’s a big risk cause money is being spent, and H-1B is not guaranteed .... I know of companies ... that ... really needed [international student applicants] for language skills, but they didn’t get picked. It’s a big risk and a lose-lose situation. There are non-profit companies that run programs for immigrants, and we need immigrants to run these programs, but companies can’t hire these qualified people. Programs are at a risk of falling apart because of lack of people who can run these programs.
Ultimately, Alexandra “would remove the cap” and “look at what’s needed, make it at a ‘more of what’s needed’ basis.” Alexandra confessed that her current place of employment wanted “to sponsor [her], but because there’s a cap, it’s a risk.”

Creating immigration pathways. Many student participants wanted to implement new policies that provided a clear immigration pathway upon graduation, yet they did not necessarily have any specific solutions in mind. A couple of students, however, did share some innovative ideas with me on how clear immigration pathways could be created for students who wanted to stay in the United States to work. For example, Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, suggested that international students who were capable of finding a U.S. job and were willing to work, should not have barriers to legally stay and work in the country:

*If a person on an F-1 visa has the ability to work and pay taxes, the person should immediately be offered an H-1B or a green card! There has to be a path to get a job. Why can’t we work? Any amount of hours, anytime, anywhere. Students work for cash anyways. It’s a lose-lose anyways. We suffer, and the government is losing money.*

Combining an F-1 status with an H-1B status, as long as F-1 students were “present in the country” and were “going to school at the same time,” was a solution offered by Charlize, former F-1 student Russia. “We should make F-1 visa equal to H-1 visa,” she suggested. “It is even better to combine these two statuses by allowing international students to study and work at the same time,” she continued. Here is how Charlize justified her proposal:

*We should legalize the possibility for international students to work because they are already working ... but illegally, getting money under table. Isn’t it a compromise option for the U.S. government and international students? Let’s legalize this, and students will have access to earn money to pay expenses, like everyone else does, and government will get taxes and better control on human rights.*
**Mirroring Canadian policies.** Three student participants (8%) gave a suggestion to look at Canadian policies, currently put in place for their international students in relation to employment rights. For example, Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, who was already a permanent resident of Canada because he had once completed a master’s degree there, thought that their policies were fair and if given the power, he would mirror those policies for international students studying in the United States. “It’s a hard mission, but it can be done,” said Nathan. Similarly, Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, admitted that Canada had much more lenient laws with regard to international students’ rights to work. “Look at Canada! Much better model. It’s more successful,” suggested Alexandra, who would have used Canada as a role model for policy change. She did understand, however, that there would “probably have to be limitations” and that she would likely not be able to completely mirror Canadian policies because the two countries’ laws in general were different, therefore, it would be a “complex” process.

Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, had the most elaborate plan on how the United States would have to guide their policy change processes in relation to employment regulations that would attract and keep the best global talent. He referred to a paper he had once read in Harvard Business Review, specifically “Customer intimacy and other value disciplines” (Treacy and Wiersema, 1993), and wanted me to look at international higher education from a business model perspective. Zack said that businesses typically had to have at least one of the following characteristics to be able to compete in the global market: “price, quality, customer intimacy, or innovation.”

He explained that the price aspect, or “cheapest education,” most likely belonged to such countries as Germany and Czech Republic, making it their competitive advantage.
Quality was most definitely seen as the winning characteristic of the U.S. education, since it was known for being “the best in the world.” The leaders of “customer intimacy” advantage, according to Zack, were France and Australia. He said that those countries had “top … but not the best schools in the world … yet it’s still good education,” therefore, those countries came up with a competitive advantage through “getting to know their customers’ needs” in order to lure international students in, such as they were “allowing you to work.” Zack then asked me: “Where is innovation? … if you want the United States to remain competitive, it would have to combine all three quadrants: price, quality and customer intimacy.” Therefore, Zack’s ultimate solution was to mirror Canadian employment-related immigration policies for international students, as Canada still had good schools, education there was cheaper, and students could work off campus without limitations. “It’s that simple,” said Zack.

The Impact of Employment-Related Immigration Policies on F-1 Students’ Socio-Economic Well-Being

Economic well-being refers to one’s ability to secure their present and future financial needs; it has a direct correlation with the opportunities provided by labor markets to secure full-employment for all and occurs within a context of economic justice (CSWE, 2016). Social well-being is characterized by the presence of equal access to one’s basic needs with opportunities for development and living a life of dignity (Calma, 2009). Socio-economic well-being is, therefore, a multifaceted concept that combines in itself many variables that address individual needs of people and may or may not include such determinants as financial security, living conditions, psychological comfort, freedom of self-expression, opportunities for development, and full access to participation in the life of community, among others (Baryshev & Kashchuk, 2016).
As evidenced by the empirical data analyzed in the preceding sections on student participants’ biggest challenges as well as their work-related experiences while in F-1 status, it can be concluded with utmost confidence that, for the most part, current employment-related immigration policies most definitely affected international students’ socio-economic well-being in a negative way. Whether student participants realized it or not, however, was an entirely different inquiry that I wanted to investigate. I hereby present an analysis of student participants’ own perceptions on how, if at all, current immigration regulations regarding F-1 students’ work rights, affected their socio-economic well-being.

Twenty-four percent of student respondents thought that policies had no effect on their socio-economic well-being, while 76% of the respondents, on the contrary, thought that they were most certainly impacted by the restrictive employment regulations. Common key terms that emerged from the analysis of student participants’ responses whose socio-economic well-being was negatively impacted, included: feeling trapped; having to lower standards of living; being forced to marry; having to live on credit cards; work insecurity directly affecting performance at school; being overqualified yet lacking confidence; being an outsider with no rights; feeling like a second class citizen; feeling like you do not belong; feeling intimidated, insecure, excluded, marginalized, frustrated, on edge, hurt, stressed, scared, powerless, anxious, etc.; having to lie; lacking freedom; being unable to travel; being prevented from pursuing goals; being scared of the U.S. government; inability to pursue dreams; living in fear; being jealous of people who could work; continuously struggling; having to hide; living a double life; having nightmares, and being rejected.

No impact. Out of 38 student participants, nine (24%) admitted that immigration policies related to their work rights in the United States did not affect their socio-economic
well-being in any way. Those nine student participants mentioned that the reason why they thought that the policies had not affected them in a negative way, was because they never had the need to work, even if they did work, because they had substantial financial support from their families or schools. Respectfully, all but one of those nine participants, originated from upper-middle-class families. And contradictorily, all but two had expressed their frustrations with current work-related policies and had shared their negative experiences in relation to how those policies unfavorably impacted them in their previous responses.

**Negative impact.** Twenty-nine student respondents (76%) identified that current employment-related immigration policies had definitely impacted their socio-economic well-being in a damaging way.

**Lower living standards.** For example, Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, admitted that policies had forced him to “lower [his] living standards” because he “had to work jobs that [he] was overqualified for, just to keep the status.” “It doesn’t make you feel very good,” confessed Richard. In the same vein, Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, also had to “give up the standards of living” because she could not “cover [her] rent” with the money she was making through her GA-ship. “Even with CPT, it is still not enough,” said Alexandra. “You are barely making it to cover your economic needs,” she added.

Similarly, Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, felt that “the stipend” that she was currently receiving “through GA-ship, [wa]s barely enough.” Meaghan felt “stressed” about the fact that she “c[ould]n’t afford to even have [her] own space”:

> I’m trying to keep my stress down, but costs of living are so high! ... I have to rent with other five students. And I’m an adult. I can’t afford a studio. It affects the quality of my life a lot. Can’t wait to get a job and move out.
Health insurance was another expense that Meagan could not afford. “It’s so stressful,” wept Meaghan. “I tried working illegally … babysitting … catering…but it’s so scary with the current administration,” she admitted. And Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, also felt frustrated with the high costs of living in [X-City in New England]:

_I live in a studio apartment, and my son is starting kindergarten, and my landlord raised rent from $1,150 to $1,300 a month, plus bills, heat, electric._

“I’m living on credit cards!”, shared Bina, a young mother, who not only had to think about her own expenses but also had to take care of her son’s well-being.

_Lack of confidence._ Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, admitted that he did not feel “confident” as a result of the restrictive employment policies. “Everyone is looking at your status,” sighed Caleb. In addition, he noted that “insecurity with work directly affected [his] performance at school” and negatively impacted his life in general, as carrying a “forever-student” label as a grown-up man was not something that he was proud of. “Insecurity with work … [is] one of the reasons why I’m still trying to finish my degree,” admitted Caleb. James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, also shared that restrictive policies “messed with [his] confidence.” The fact that he was forced to get an “illegal job” because he “couldn’t find a legal job,” resulted in him being “afraid of cops and everyone, really.” “You live in fear,” James confessed.

_Fear._ Employment restrictions also created fear in Oliva, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, who, like James, had to work under-the-table because it was her “only option.” Olivia “always had to hide … and lie to other people,” which made her “miserable,” as living a “double life” was by no means easy for her:

_You have a double-life to some extent .... In one of your lives, you are a student who studies hard and doesn’t work, on another side, you are an undocumented worker who is trying to survive._
Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, was “always scared of people finding out [her] working” as well. “I had to be cautious,” said Gina. “I was afraid of not pursuing my dreams just because of the limitations,” she added.

Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan, despite being a U.S. citizen now, was still feeling “anxious” and “afraid” as a result of her experiences with employment regulations when she was an F-1 student. She was still having “nightmares” and feared expressing her voice:

> It was so difficult ..., made me an anxious ... person. Even now, when I am a U.S. citizen, I am still afraid to express my voice in fear that someone will go back to my immigration application and find something to take the status away from me. I have nightmares about it. Like, me screaming at a cop: ‘You! I have the same rights like you, I am a citizen!’ I don’t know why I keep seeing those dreams. Feels like subconsciously, I’m still afraid and ... living in that immigrant vulnerable mentality.

**Financial insecurity.** Being a full-time student, having to pay for school and other expenses, and not being able to freely work off campus, made Leila’s life a “living hell.” Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, wanted to focus on her studies, but her financial insecurity pushed her into continuously having to prioritize work over education:

> Study was difficult, and education wasn’t a priority ... because bills were all over me. I would wake up in bed and think about bills. I was constantly struggling. Do I go to class or do I pick up an extra shift at work so that I can pay my bills?

For Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, the feeling of financial insecurity emerged soon after the Muslim ban (82 FR 8977, 2017) happened:

> Iranian currency dropped significantly after the ban. One U.S. dollar equaled 2,600 tumans when I started in the U.S. After the ban, one dollar became 13,000 tumans. I was no longer financially secure.

Even though Mirah admitted that she had not necessarily been severely affected by the currency drop, she still felt like she needed to do something “to take the burden off the
shoulders of [her] parents,” which made her “really anxious.” Similarly, Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, despite the scholarship she had received from her government as well as financial support from family, still experienced the periods of financial insecurity:

*One time I lived on ten dollars for two weeks. If I had the opportunity to work, it would fix that. The scholarship that I received from Saudi wasn’t enough to pay rent. Parents helped out ... but I wish I didn’t have to take the money from them, and I could be independent.*

**Inequality.** Regardless of whether they were financially secure or not, several student participants indicated that their socio-economic well-being was affected by inequality current employment-related immigration policies fostered in their own, unique ways. For example, Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, felt “left out” during the first two years” when he had continuously experienced rejection from employers:

*We [international students] couldn’t be [fully] connected to the career services’ dashboard because we couldn’t get American jobs. Our profiles had immigration status .... I didn’t do internships the first two years because I simply couldn’t find them.*

Even later, when Santiago figured out how to look for jobs on his own, he still had to go through a number of rejections, which made him feel like an “outcast.” He shared one case with me to further explain what he meant:

*One time, I got hired by a company, and we had such a great connection ... and by the end of the interview I asked about H-1B, and she literally handed me my resume back and said ‘no, we don’t’.*

Although Santiago had ended up securing a good internship with his father’s help, the fact that he was continuously treated differently from his U.S.-citizen and permanent-resident peers, still left a mark on his life. Similarly, Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam, who knew “from the beginning” that it was going to be “harder” for her as an international student
to get a job as compared to her non-international peers, admitted that despite being somewhat prepared for the “struggle,” “being rejected hurt.”

Life was a “constant struggle” for Kat, former F-1 student Chile, who was also frustrated with the fact that international students did not have equal rights. “OMG! You have to keep-up with your I-20, it puts us to an edge!”, exclaimed Kat. “Inequality” was the most bothering factor that had directly affected her socio-economic well-being. Kat still did not understand why international students could not work “at least part-time” despite paying much higher tuition than “Americans”:

*It’s not like we are here for free. Young people come here to better their lives, and the government is taking advantage of us. Americans were born here, so they deserve all the rights. But we spend money here, and we have to go through so much frustration!*  

“Locals can work anywhere …, it doesn’t matter where you work,” echoed Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, and “international students don’t have that luxury.” Kalvin admitted that he was “jealous of people who c[ould] work” because he would have loved an opportunity to “make [his] own … personal money” even though he was getting an “allowance” from his parents. Kalvin wished he could be independent, but the “unfair” policies were depriving him of that freedom.

*Pressure.* Kalvin’s compatriot Daniel, former F-1 student from Indonesia, also indicated having had been affected by the restrictive policies in a negative way. “A lot of companies ask whether you need sponsorship at the very start,” stated Daniel. “It’s intimidating, it’s ridiculous! … It sucks that it’s tough for us with the jobs,” he added. Daniel admitted that those regulations forced him to start lying on job applications about his status, something that was against his moral code, but something that he had been doing anyways in the hopes of making “the company fall in love with [him]” and “potentially hire [him]
permanently.” Being forced to “do something that you don’t really want” was also a consequence for Derek, former F-1 student from China. The fact that work limitations had been continuously preventing him from becoming “independent from [his] parents” really affected his socio-economic well-being, making him “depressed and anxious.”

When Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova, found out that her H-1B application had been denied, she was forced to “marry [her] boyfriend who [she] wasn’t sure about,” as it was the only way to stay and work in the United States. Anya’s hesitations about her boyfriend “turned out to be true, as he ended up being a raging alcoholic.” She suffered a painful divorce as a consequence.

**Exclusion.** Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, believed that when she could do internships through CPT, money was not a problem, and she felt confident and comfortable. However, when those opportunities were not available, and she was forced to work under-the-table to provide for herself, Charlize felt like “a second-class citizen” and “an outsider with no rights.” Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, felt the same way, having explained that because employment in her field was unattainable, she was compelled to taking on jobs that were demeaning and unfulfilling:

> We [international students] are second-class citizens .... I have a master’s degree ... and I’m cleaning tables .... I am overqualified for everything .... Americans are not always qualified, but they can work .... How am I gonna feel empowered and confident? .... I interview for jobs but I am not confident.

Peter, former F-1 student from India, felt “stressed because [he] had to keep [his] F-1 status to stay in the country, and [his] school was SO expensive.” Even though he was able to find loopholes to stay in F-1 status by transferring to a community college, which was significantly cheaper, after having had already obtained two master’s degrees, Peter still felt “powerless” because he did not have the “status that would allow [him] to work.” When the
money became really tough, Peter had to borrow money from friends, and that was “embarrassing” to him. “You need to be independent financially for your own well-being,” admitted Peter.

For Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, work restrictions were also “stressful.” Every time she would go and “try to get a job,” she was afraid that employers would “ask [her] for papers.” In addition, everyone in Tatiana’s surroundings would make her feel even worse by continuously “scaring [her] that [she] was gonna get caught” one day. Upton, former F-1 student from Turkey also admitted that having had to navigate through the “ambiguous” employment policies after he had graduated, was a “stressful period,” which negatively impacted his socio-economic well-being. “You don’t know what’s gonna happen to you tomorrow,” said Upton.

Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, felt hopeless and rejected as a result of the policies that not only restricted his employment aspirations but were also inadequate for anyone who was seeking a legal pathway to stay and work in the United States:

_The system is pushing you back home, and the family home doesn’t want you there either because you don’t belong there anymore. They want you to succeed where you are after a year or two years. They call me an American when I go home. For my mom to say that my son is in America is a sign of success. It’s a social status for my mom. It elevates her status._

Nathan was despondent over the fact that he could not be who his family saw him as in reality. “Restrictive rules” affected Tina’s socio-economic well-being “badly” as well. “You always feel excluded and you always feel marginalized,” Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, admitted. “Every time you go for an organizational interview, they ask you for your status,” she continued, “and it’s a stop point, you can’t really do anything.” Tina
touched upon a very important topic of one’s feeling of inclusion in the United States, which I am uncovering in the section that follows.

**F-1 students’ feelings of inclusion/ exclusion in the United States.** The concept of social inclusion does not have a universal definition: some perspectives depict it as an ideal outcome (Labonte, 2004) or the extent to which humans can participate in society without having to encounter the barriers unwillingly imposed on them by their own identity (The World Bank, 2013). Others view it as a process (Council of the EU, 2004) or a conceptual space that can unite people (Boushey, Fermstad, Gragg, & Waller, 2007). The concept of social exclusion does not have a generally accepted definition either (Hayes, Gray, & Edward, 2008). Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud (1999) stated that exclusion was about mechanisms that contributed to inequality, while Labonte (2004) saw it as the result of policies and practice that predicated inequality.

My understanding of social inclusion is that it is a positive outcome of policies that assert human dignity above politics. Following that logic, social exclusion, therefore, in my opinion, stems from the regulations that do not address individual needs and are not built on the principles of empathy and human dignity. I did not impose my views on the student participants during our conversations, however. I simply inquired about whether they felt included as F-1 students living in the United States, or not.

Empirical data showed that thirteen student respondents (34%) felt excluded. Twelve participants (32%) said that they felt only partially excluded, having identified ways in which they otherwise felt included. Eleven respondents (29%) felt fully included. One student participant (2.5%) stated that they intentionally chose to exclude themselves. And one respondent (2.5%), on the contrary, said that they forcefully included themselves into society,
as that they were not willing to wait for society to include them. See Table 6 below for the summary of student participants’ responses about their feelings of inclusion or otherwise exclusion within the U.S. society.

Table 6

*Student Participants: Feeling of Inclusion/Exclusion*

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**Excluded.** Thirteen student respondents (34%) stated that they did not feel included at all in the United States as F-1 students. A variety of reasons were mentioned, but the ones that prevailed were related to cultural differences, being a foreigner, and to being barred from work opportunities.

**Cultural differences.** For Ash, former F-1 student from India, the biggest barrier to feeling included was a cultural one. Ash felt like the U.S. culture, specifically its sense of humor, was so different from his, that it made it difficult for him to create meaningful and lasting connections with people:

*There is always a missing link between American humor and yours. You don’t understand their jokes. Our jokes are different. It’s not even about being able to connect with people. I do connect, but I always know there is this missing link.*

Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, felt excluded for two reasons. The first one was connected to her lack of opportunity to get a “real job like the rest,” but the second reason was related to her cultural beliefs, which played a bigger role in her feeling of exclusion. “I don’t share most of my cultural beliefs with Americans,” admitted Celine. She confessed that she had “zero American friends” because she “didn’t assimilate.” Celine shared that all of her
friends were international, and that they all kept telling her that she was going to “become Americanized” one day, but she did not think that it would ever happen. “I’m still Colombian, and I haven’t changed,” she admitted.

Similarly, Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, echoed Celine by saying that she “didn’t feel completely assimilated here [in the United States]” either. Tatiana added: “I definitely feel different … I don’t like talking about sports.” Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam, also did not feel included because she thought that “conversations [in the United States] [we]re pretty superficial.” In addition, Tess did not like that “deep connection with family [wa]s not a common thing in America.” She also did not like “American consumerism.” Ultimately, Tess thought that she would “never feel a 100% included [in the United States] … because [she was not] from here … and ha[d] an accent.”

Foreigner label. Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, also mentioned that she felt excluded because she was not from the United States and that everything she did was not “American enough.” Meaghan said that she could not get away from being continuously reminded about the fact that she was not an “American” because people were “non-stop asking [her] where [she was] from.” So was the case with Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, who, just like Meaghan, did not feel included because of her not-from-here status. Even though she was now married to a U.S. citizen, she was still considering moving to a different country because of how hostile she found the U.S. environment to be:

There are parts of this country that I wouldn’t even consider going to ... Confederate flags everywhere ... those places ... I would never tell people where I am from. I’d think of saying ‘Greece’, not ‘Iran’. When I travel without my American husband, I am being pulled over at the airport for questioning. When we go to [husband’s home state], I can tell that there is tension. I didn’t feel very welcomed to begin with when I came to [X-City in New England]. I went to an event, and someone asked me where I was from, and I said, ‘Iran’, and they said, ‘So, you are a terrorist?!’. This is when I knew I probably didn’t want to stay here.
Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, also felt excluded because she “felt discriminated against being a non-American,” especially at her school. Gina shared a story about one teacher who “kicked her out” of the classroom because she stood up for a fellow international student:

One of my teachers was racist. I was the only Latina and there was one Asian girl. The girl had a strong accent, and the teacher was like, ‘I don’t understand what you are saying’.... Teacher was so mean, so I was like, ‘You know what, that’s not ok... She is pronouncing the work the way she can’... The teacher was like, ‘Why are you interrupting me?’.... And I was like, ‘Her and I are the only non-Americans here, and you do that to me too. It’s not fair!’.... Teacher was like, ‘Are you done?’ I said, ‘Yes’, and the teacher was like, ‘because you can leave right now.’

Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, who has been living in the United States for over 13 years at this point, still did not feel like she “belonged.” “I still feel like an outsider,” she admitted. In addition, she noted that not only she felt like she “didn’t belong a 100% here [in the United States]” but that she also knew that she “didn’t belong a 100% there [in her home country]”:

I feel like I belong somewhere else because of the cultural background. We celebrate all the holidays that are here to be a part of the society, but you don’t... actually feel it from the heart. You will never forget the part of you. You will die with it.

Kat also mentioned that even if “society might decide to include you ..., you don’t necessarily feel included.” This idea about the difference between an inclusion by a society and one’s perception of being included within that society, was also articulated by Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany. Alexandra admitted that even though she “didn’t feel included at all” in the United States, she was not sure if she even “wanted to be included” in the first place. As a white woman from Europe with “the most powerful passport in the world,” she was not seeking inclusion “from Americans.” Alexandra was currently considering other countries where she could potentially move to upon her graduation, as she
was tired of endless employment restrictions in the United States aligned with the total absence of any realistic pathways towards permanent residency for F-1 students.

*Work restrictions.* Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, did not feel included in the United States solely because of “lack of work opportunities” for him as an international student. Same reason was identified by Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, who felt rejected by the United States and its policies:

*I applied for a lot of jobs here, but it all comes down to: ‘Do you have the permit to work?’*. Psychologically, it’s very hard to understand that no matter what I do, I will be rejected. All my classmates from [X-University] now work at the World Bank because they have papers. Sometimes you even consider illegal marriages. We shouldn’t have to go through these desperate routes to belong to this country. We crossed so many miles to come here. We could have gone anywhere, but we wanted to be a part of THIS country. We wanted this country to be proud of us. You can’t wish for more from a good citizen.

For Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, employment-related immigration policies were also her biggest barrier to feeling included in the United States. Due to the “restrictive context” of immigration policies, Tina felt like she had no chance of ever getting a “legal permission to work in the U.S.” despite being professionally qualified:

*Some companies simply don’t know how the whole F-1 status works, so they don’t want to deal with it. They don’t want to deal with IRS or immigration. Even if they could find ways, they are kind of afraid of the word ‘immigration’.*

Similarly, for Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, employment restrictions significantly contributed to his feeling of exclusion. “Included? No man, I couldn’t work, I couldn’t get a loan… that’s bullshit!”, exclaimed Zack. Zack did not even choose to be in an F-1 status but was rather forced into it because he couldn’t go to college under the H-4 visa that he had originally entered the country with as a minor dependent of his H-1B-visa-holder-father. That is why for him, it was a “matter of survival” to be able to work to pay for school.
And the fact that he was forbidden to legally work when he needed the money “to survive” by no means made him feel included.

**Partially excluded; included to a certain extent.** Thirty-two percent of the respondents felt only partially excluded and mentioned some of the aspects that made them feel included. “It’s 50/50,” said Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, when he was talking about his views on whether or not he had felt included in the United States. “Some people are nice, but some people don’t want to know about you too much, they want to stay away,” he elaborated. So, for Richard, the feeling of inclusion depended directly on the people he was interacting with. Similarly, for Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, it also came down to the people who would either make him feel comfortable or, on the contrary, would “make [him] feel like [he was] not fully integrated.” “Sometimes it’s cultural, sometimes it’s the language, I think. Maybe, 50/50,” admitted Braden. He concluded that in general, however, he felt “comfortable to a level that [he] still want[ed] to stay here [in the United States], but [he] d[id]n’t feel like [he was] an American.”

Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, echoed Braden on the “language” aspect contributing to her partial feeling of exclusion:

> *When I am on the phone, there are ... some people who have trouble understanding me .... It makes me feel like ... fuck ... it’s more like, it’s me, not the other person .... So, that’s one thing that doesn’t make me feel completely included.*

The language aspect, however, was something that was only currently preventing Charlize from feeling fully included; it was not the only thing that had bothered her when she was in an F-1 status. It is important to note that when she was a student, Charlize felt like an “outsider with no rights.” Now that she was a U.S. citizen however, she had an entirely different perspective:
I feel like I have all the rights. I feel protected. I have a problem, I make a phone call and it takes care of itself.

Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, felt like she felt comfortable in the United States “when it came to cultural inclusion,” but “felt like an alien … when it came to jobs and all the restrictions”:

Generally, here [in the United States], I never felt discriminated against. People … from churches and other places … are nice. It’s just the matter of these policing-type policies …. When it comes to immigration policies,… I feel like … I don’t belong …. If you are student, you can’t do this, if you are parent and not a citizen, you can’t do that, and so on.

In the same vein, James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, just like Bina, felt included when it came to his interactions with people, “especially on campus,” but felt excluded when it came to the “work part.” Despite being excluded from free participation in the workforce when he was in an F-1 status, James “never felt out of place” on campus because he “had a lot of friends who were Latin American.” Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, felt the same way. “People are nice …, so until now [OPT period], I felt included, … and I hope it won’t get worse in the future,” stated Kalvin. However, he started feeling excluded when he had realized that gaining employment as an F-1 student was not as easy as he had expected:

Having a status of an international student does make you excluded …. I think that people who study hard should get recognized in the labor market. If you do well in school, you should do well in your career. If you do poorly in school, then it’s your fault that you can’t succeed.

Kalvin was overwhelmed by the revelation that regardless of how well one did in school, employment was not guaranteed, and he felt as that was unfair.

Kalvin’s compatriot Daniel, an F-1 student from Indonesia, had a two-fold view on feeling included in the United States as well. Yet, the aspect that made him feel partially excluded had nothing to do with employment policies. “Luckily, with most of my American
friends, I feel included,” stated Daniel. He did admit, however, that he would “get
discrimination from random people.” For example, Daniel felt like when he was “talking to
someone from customer service,” people were not treating him like they “would have treated
Americans.” Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova, stated that although generally she felt
included in the United States, she still was not feeling completely “comfortable” for two
reasons. The first one was cultural:

> You are used to stuff that you get introduced to in childhood. That, never went away,
like the food, the holidays, songs.

Another aspect was a linguistic one. “I’m still uncomfortable … with the [English] language,”
admitted Anya. “Sometimes it’s not easy to build a conversation,” she added. Similarly, for
Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan, the language aspect was something that
prevented her from feeling fully included. However, in her situation, it was not the problem
of linguistic fluency, as Stella spoke perfect English and had no problem building
conversations with people, but of confidence using her English when it came to situations of
conflict, cases where she needed to “defend” herself:

> There was this … lady in my apartment building who yelled at me for drying my
sneakers in the dryer for half hour. She said that she was going to report me …. It’s
crazy, but I couldn’t really stand up for myself because I … felt afraid to express my
voice …. I always feel like since I wasn’t born here … I’m afraid to say anything …. When I was fired from my volunteering job …, I also just swallowed it and left. I
choked up; I was afraid of expressing my voice.

Stella admitted that when she had to defend herself in her native language, she had no
problem doing that, but in situations with “Americans,” she would just “freeze.”

For Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, the feeling of inclusion depended
exclusively on the geographic location within the United States he would find himself in. For
example, he felt “fully included in New York” because he could easily “blend in” there and
feel like “a local.” Same with Miami: “It’s like Latin America,” said Santiago. However, if he would go to “places that [we]ren’t so much used to diversity,” like Dakota, it would be an “entirely different” experience for Santiago:

*I feel like a Mexican Mariachi who just jumped over the border and was like, ‘you want some tacos?’*

Santiago also noted that “Americans [we]re different” everywhere. “Americans in big cities … like Los Angeles, Chicago … are used to diversity,” thought Santiago. “It makes you feel connected to them. You are a part of their group,” he added. However, certain places in the United States “scared” Santiago.

Ultimately, student participants who felt only partially included in the United States, shared that the aspects that still contributed to their fragmentary feeling of exclusion, were related to cultural differences, language barriers, restrictive employment regulations, a foreigner status, the type of people they interacted with, as well as specific geographic locations they would find themselves in.

**Fully included.** Twenty-nine percent of student respondents stated that they felt fully included in the United States. “I never felt like I didn’t belong here,” admitted Derek, former F-1 student from China. Derek shared with me that his “second generation immigrant friends” would always say that he “d[id]n’t belong to either China or here [the United States].” but he could not agree less:

*I’m exotic to this U.S. culture. I’m special. We always have good conversations with Americans. I’m different, exclusive, cool. I can keep my mental peace. I never feel like I’m less. I might not feel confident at times, but I still manage to adjust to the environment.*

Similarly, Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, also “f[elt] like [he] belong[ed],” having stated that he “never had any problems,” at least in [X-State in New England], which Ian
considered “very diverse.” Ian did admit, however, that if he were in “Texas … or some other states, it would probably be different” because there, “everyone [wa]s white and [he] was not.” Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, who also felt “fully included,” nevertheless, noted that the feeling of one’s inclusion “depend[ed] on the community” one lived in. And Jack’s community where he currently lived in “felt like home” to him. Same for Maya, former F-1 student from Russia, who identified feeling included because she felt like she was “a part of the community” where she currently lived and worked in.

Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, felt fully included as well. “I never felt attacked or harassed,” she admitted. But the main reason Abigail felt comfortable with her surrounding was because she “made a lot of friends from here, the U.S., so [she] always knew what to expect going into different situations.” Upton, former F-1 student from Turkey admitted that he felt “happy” and “included” because the “U.S. society [wa]s very diverse,” therefore he always “fe[lt] like there [we]re many people similar to [him] around [him],” which contributed to his feeling of inclusion. In the same fashion, Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, stated that it was because “[X-City in New England] [wa]s very international … and not like the Middle East” that made her feel like she was “never … excluded.”

Kruz, former F-1 student from Czech Republic, considered “the fact that [he] [wa]s from somewhere else,” only gave him “more advantage,” specifically in his career. Kruz said that his colleagues would “always look at [him] as someone who kn[ew] better about the things in [his] business” and would constantly seek his advice. Because Kruz felt accomplished and valued in the United States, he felt fully included.
Other. Unlike the rest of the respondents, two student participants did not have a straightforward answer to the question about whether they felt included or not. For example, Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, thought that it was a “double-sided question”:

On the one hand, I am fully included, but on the other hand, I don’t participate in many conversations ... or ... sports events .... So, I choose to exclude myself from certain things. It’s my personal choice.

While Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, on the contrary, said that she forcefully included herself into society, explaining her view with a powerful message:

I included myself into this society. I worked really hard to feel that I’m included. I don’t care whether the society includes me or not. If someone doesn’t want to include me, it’s their problem.

Leila was not going to wait to be included, she made herself included, and was now living a fulfilling life as an accomplished professional, a loving mother and wife.

Ultimately, out of the total of 38 student respondents, the vast majority (over 66%) identified having felt excluded in the U.S. society to at least some extent, whereas 29% felt fully included.

Meanings assigned to the concept of work by F-1 students. Since the study focused on international students who worked while they were in an F-1 status, with the main research question revolving around student participants’ socio-economic well-being in the face of current employment-related immigration policies, it only made sense to inquire about the meanings my student respondents assigned to the concept of work. Many definitions were shared with me. Some of the more common key words that emerged from our conversations about the meaning of work, included: freedom; personal development; self-actualization; life balance; independence; fulfillment; learning process; growth; happiness; identity; emotional
stability; social stability; financial survival; part of life; feeling useful; being able to help people; create; make a difference; make parents proud; build relationships, and many other.

Earlier in Chapter 2, I talked about how work was more than just a way for people to be able to sustain themselves financially. I argued that work was important for one’s socio-economic well-being, personal development, feeling of inclusion, living a life of dignity, and other crucial factors. Empirical findings obtained from the interviews conducted with my student participants, confirmed my epistemological position. I hereby dissect student responses into five categories: 1) social integration and meaningful contribution; 2) development: personal and professional; 3) emotional fulfillment and happiness/ part of identity; 4) financial security and independence, as well as 5) economic mobility and success.

**Social integration and meaningful contribution.** For several student respondents, work was primarily about feeling like they were a part of society and were being useful to society within the scope of their jobs. “Work is intertwined with social integration,” said Richard, former F-1 student from Italy. “Work … is a way to know that you are a part of the society,” echoed Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia:

*Work* is very important to my life .... I want to contribute. Especially in careers like sustainability .... You do it because you want to HELP! I want to make a difference!

For Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, work was also about “being able to contribute to a larger part of the society, not just [him]self.” Caleb saw work as a way to “create, … to help people, … to work WITH people” and not just “sit at the desk all day.” In a like manner, Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, stated that “being IN the community” and “working WITH people” was “uplifting … mentally and emotionally” for her. Tina’s view on work was about the connection with people in whose life she could “make a difference” and in return “not feeling alone.”
For Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, knowing that she was “useful” through her job was the most important factor. “It helps my emotional stability to know that I am useful, … it helps you grow as a person,” explained Abigail. Similarly, for Daniel, an F-1 student from Indonesia, work was “the way to become useful to society.” And for Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, and Kruz, former F-1 student from Czech Republic, work was about “helping others.” “Work … is about helping people,” stated Bina. “I want to help people, especially those who are minority groups,” she continued. “When I think of work, I think of people who need my help too,” added Bina. And Kruz admitted that being able to help people “provide[d] him with a good reason to live for and be proud of.” Kruz elaborated: “Think about what you talk about when you meet friends,” suggesting that, ideally, one’s job should be meaningful if they wanted to feel like they were contributing to a larger society.

**Development: personal and professional.** Some student respondents focused more on how work enabled them to develop and grow as individuals and professionals. For example, Braden thought of work as an opportunity to be exposed to “an environment where [one] can grow in professionally … and develop personally by taking learning curves.” Although Braden thought that, ideally, work would be doing “something that you like,” he also noted that even “doing something that you don’t like” would still “help you understand better what you actually want to do,” explaining that any work was contributing to one’s development. Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, also speculated that if he “didn’t have a job, [he]’d be wasting [his] life and [his] degree.” “Even if you don’t like your job, it’s still useful,” suggested Kalvin, who, like Braden, thought that gaining work experience was intrinsic to one’s development.
Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, also thought that work was important for one’s development. She explained that if people did not continuously develop, they would “get dumb.” As a new mom, Tatiana chose to continue her career despite her spouse’s high income. “I like to learn new things, make a difference, meet new people,” admitted Tatiana, who did not want to spend her entire life “just sitting at home and taking care of babies.” For Charlize, another former F-1 student from Russia, work was about “self-realization and self-improvement.” Just like Tatiana, Charlize thought that if one did not continuously work on their development, they would “become a vegetable.” For Charlize, work was a “lifestyle,” and it was different from the “job” concept:

_Work is passion when it’s equal to a job. Job is slavery. Work is ... everything, and everything is work ...: relationship is work, going to the gym is work, being uncomfortable is work, sitting at a desk is work, ... going to the next level is work. It’s a lifestyle._

Finally, Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, who also tied the concept of work to one’s capacity to develop and grow, said that for her, work was a combination of “experience, knowledge, and practice.” Gina explained that at school, people develop by “learning systems,” whereas during personal and professional interactions, people learn “how to read people.” When one gets a job, “the actual work” then becomes about “putting everything into practice.” Gina saw work as a continuum with a number of development stages that enable one to grow and learn how to solve real-life problems.

_Emotional fulfillment and happiness; part of identity._ For a number of student participants, work meant personal satisfaction with doing something that they truly enjoyed and was something that was a big part of who they were in a larger picture. For example, Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, “really enjoyed working, especially in a healthy environment.” Leila specified that it was important for her to be “happy at work.” For
example, she shared that she “love[d] working with people from different countries and backgrounds,” and even though she would sometimes encounter “difficult people,” Leila always saw it “as a learning opportunity.” Similarly, for Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, doing something that she “like[d], but ideally, … love[d]” was more important than money. For Meaghan, work was about the “fulfillment” she would get from doing “something that [she was] passionate about.”

For Olivia, work also meant something more than just financial security. Work was a big part of her identity, and she loved feeling recognized and valued at her job:

*Work for me is not just money, it’s a big part of my life ..., it makes me who I am. It’s important for me to be surrounded by people who are smarter. I like to be able to contribute to decision making. I like seeing results that were driven by my contributions. It stems from my personality, to feel the power of opinion, to be recognized as value.*

Similarly, for Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, work also meant “more than just money,” and he considered “a sense of gratification that you are of value” being the most important aspect of work. For Ash, former F-1 student from India, work was all about “the right opportunity” that made him “truly happy.” Ash gave me an example of his mother, who was a doctor and who had told him that “she w[ould] never retire.” “Work is a learning process, growth education,” he admitted, but all of that did not matter “if you c[ouldn’t] feel happy.” “I spend most of the time at work. Work is a part of my life,” concluded Ash. Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, also said that it was important for him to “do something that he love[d] and [was] happy about.” Caleb was determined that when it came to work, it was essential to “surround yourself with an environment that ma[de] you happy.”

Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, stated that for her, work was a “part of [her] identity that was fulfilling [her] interests.” She specified that for students in particular,
being able to work in the field that they were studying and “really like[d]” was a chance of “fulfilling an extension of what [they] want[ed] to be.” Alexandra saw work as one’s means of “self-actualization.” “I want to have a fulfilling job, not just a job to have money,” she added. Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, also mentioned that work was not just about “doing something that [she] like[d]” but was also about “doing what [wa]s related to what [she] went to school for.” Abigail admitted that being “fairly compensated” was an important aspect as well because without the money, she would not be able to “do all the fun stuff and keep the balance in life”:

I personally think that I couldn’t live without a job. I’m used to working. To stop working is not an option …. And even if I don’t like the job, I’d still do it. Working is a part of me, I enjoy work and I would try to look for a solution.

For Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam and a new mom, work was “about being busy” because “now, with family, [she] ha[d] to balance stuff,” and work was something that “ke[pt] her sane.” Before motherhood, Tess really enjoyed seeing herself “progress at work,” but even now, she still enjoyed “learning about new tech things that [she] like[d] to do.” In addition, Tess had “nice colleagues,” which made her feel “happy and fulfilled” at work. And Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova, admitted that work was “the most important thing” for her, and that she “wanted career before [she]’d start a family.” Anya’s main idea was that in the United States, it was one’s career, not marital status, that identified women, and she was happy that her current job was now being a part of her identity that made her feel independent:

Work is important because you identify with your job. And I don’t like how young girls in Moldova only want to get married to a rich guy. I actually want to be independent and use my own brain. I like that I have a career, and that despite whether I’m married or not, I can have that.
Financial security and independence. One aspect that was mentioned by many respondents, was the feeling of independence that stemmed from financial security that work provided. “Work means freedom. FREEDOM from everybody!”, exclaimed Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan. “Work means independence and financial security,” echoed Peter, former F-1 student from India, admitting that those two factors were “very important for [his] own peace of mind and well-being.” For Bianca, former F-1 student from Honduras, work was also primarily about being able to provide financial and, therefore, “social stability” to her “family” and, as a result, being “independent.” In the same vein, Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, stated that for her, “work mean[t] independence, financial support, stability, and safety.” Rachael clarified that by “independence,” she meant “not having to rely on others,” as being dependent on someone was “emotional for [her].” “When you feel like you need someone, it affects you psychologically,” admitted Rachael.

For Derek, former F-1 student from China, work was also about financial security, but not just in the sense of being able to make money, but for the sake of feeling independent from his parents. Derek admitted that “if [he] couldn’t work or find work, [he]’d feel bad for [his] parents cause [he]’d have to ask them for help.” Derek said that even though his current job was “ok,” as it was simply providing him with the “money to make [him] live,” he still felt “like [he was] achieving something,” particularly because he was no longer dependent on his parents. It was important for Derek as his parents kept pressuring him into continuing his education further by going to law school, saying ‘we’ll pay for your tuition.’ “They are forcing me to quit my job, and I’m like, ‘no thank you’ … I don’t want to be dependent on them again. It’s depressing.”
For some students the concept of work had a direct connotation with “financial security.” For Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, work was strictly about “money.” For Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, work also meant “money and bills.” Ian did admit, however, that “if [he] was rich, [he]’d still be working, just not from nine to five.” James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, also saw work as a means of financial security. “Work means retribution for why I know and what I can do,” he stated. However, James admitted that even though work was “very important” to him, “it [wa]sn’t everything.” “My family is more important,” concluded James.

Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, also admitted that for him, work was strictly about “making money”:

*I truly admire the people that see work as the purpose in life. I think of work as making money .... I mean, I feel like if I didn’t need the money, I wouldn’t work. And it’s not necessarily because I don’t enjoy doing what I love now. I think even if I find the job that I really-really love, my dream would be to not worry about the financial part. You do spend a lot of time at work. It helps when you like what you do so you are not miserable. But in the end of the day, work is a revenue generating activity.*

For Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, work was also about compensation. However, she did make an important notation that there was a big difference between “just work” and “decent work.” Mirah emphasized that no one deserved to have a job that was not of “decent nature.” “Like when you have to wear a diaper because you don’t get a bathroom break,” she specified. But if people chose to work for themselves and were doing it to themselves in order to make profit, that was not necessarily an issue. Mirah referred to that example because she used to have her own business back in Iran, and she said that even though it was “physically exhausting” to run it, as in “[she] would be up till three in the morning,” the “business was the job that actually brought [her] money.”
Economic mobility and success. Different from financial security, economic mobility is not just about making enough money to be independent but is about moving up the social ladder. A couple of students identified the concept of work as one’s opportunity to achieve success by moving up their economic status to the next level. Jaden, an F-1 student from India, gave the most elaborate response on the meaning he assigned to the notion of work. In his opinion, work was about “get[ting] to a different class, social circle” and about ultimately being able to “spend money and time on whatever [he] want[ed].” Jaden was critical of the way “masses” perceived work. “Work is to be a productive member of the society, yes,” admitted Jaden, but in his view, work was also about being able to “spend the money you earn on things that you like.” Jaden wanted to “move up …, to enjoy the perfection of mankind [it] spent centuries perfecting,” to be able to “purchase things that [we]re expensive,” to “be unique,” and to “be in a better position in the future”:

People work all the time, and they can’t stop …. Work is not just a career building thing. What you do after with your earnings is what makes a life worth living …. You cannot be that financially stupid to not have the money to retire …. People don’t realize it. They can do so much more with their lives if they think differently …. I don’t want to just do things like everyone else does them.

Ultimately, for Jaden, work was about achieving a higher socio-economic status where he would be able to “simply enjoy life,” without having to worry about what “most people on the planet worr[jed] about.”

For Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, moving up the socio-economic ladder was also the meaning he put behind the concept of work. Despite having several master’s degrees and being almost done with his PhD, Nathan’s plan upon graduation was by no means related to applying his extensive knowledge of international affairs and conflict resolution into the field. His plan was to start “buying apartments and investing into real
“estate” to build a platform for significant economic growth. He did admit that a regular job would provide him with financial security, but that type of comfort was not his ultimate goal. Nathan felt like he had already “wasted so much time” going through immigration hoops to get to a level where his family back home finally saw at least some hope of getting out of poverty, that he no longer had the patience to devote his life to settling for comfort.

Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, viewed work as a way of socio-economic growth as well. For Kat, work was not just about the “money to provide stability,” it was about the “achievement, success” that she could ultimately showcase to society. Work also sounded synonymous to the word “success” to Morris, an F-1 student from Morocco, who was planning to move back home after getting his MBA and use his academic degrees obtained in the United States as a marketing tool for better career opportunities.
CHAPTER 5
POWERING THROUGH AND TRYING TO FIT IN

Empirical findings presented in this section shed light on the following themes uncovered during the qualitative data collection process: International Students’ Coping Strategies; Discrepancy Between Goals and Means: F-1 Students’ Adaptive Behaviors, and Students’ Reflections on their F-1 journeys: What Now. Thematic and sub-thematic synthesis, presented in the Qualitative Data Analysis Summary part, was developed to provide a complete and comprehensive picture of the student participants’ experiences of living and working in the United States while in an F-1 status, revealing how current employment-related immigration policies affected their socio-economic well-being, along with the coping strategies undertaken by the respondents in the face of those policies, the main research questions of this exploratory research study.

International Students’ Coping Strategies

How did student participants navigate through the challenges identified by them earlier in Chapter 4? What adaptive mechanisms did they utilize, particularly in the face of employment-related immigration policies? Empirical data presented in earlier segments partly covered some of the aspects of those questions. However, whether student participants considered some of their actions undertaken during difficult situations as coping strategies or not, was a distinct inquiry that I wanted to investigate. I hereby present an analysis of student
participants’ own perceptions on how, if at all, they coped with the challenges that arose as a consequence of current employment-related immigration regulations.

**Operationalizing the concept of coping.** The notion of coping refers to ways in which people deal with stressful situations (Maghan, 2017). The work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) is considered to be one of the most notable ones in the area of social psychology focusing on the topic of coping styles (Maghan, 2017). Respectively, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified two main coping styles: emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping, to which I refer further in my analysis.

In addition to Lazarus and Folkman’ (1984) work, I employed Merton’s (1938) strain theory, to operationalize the concept of coping that best suited my inquiry about student participants’ adaptive mechanisms utilized in the face of difficult situations. Empirical data presented in Chapter 4 confirmed deviant behavior, such as students working without authorization. Therefore, I found Merton’s (1938) theory, where societal structures exerting pressure on people resulted in “nonconformist conduct” (Merton, 1938, p.672), appropriate in application to my analysis of student participants’ adaptive behaviors.

Furthermore, I did not just focus on student participants’ cognitive responses to socio-economic challenges, but also on their undertaken, or otherwise averted, actions in the face of circumstances that obstructed their goals. Carver and Scheier (2008) argued that goals should be put in the center of research-driven inquiries about coping because what essentially resulted in stress, were the obstacles that stood in the way of people trying to achieve their goals. My operational definition of coping, therefore, hereby refers to student participants’ problem solving mechanisms, specifically in relation to their ultimate goals and ways in which they chose to achieve them.
**Emotion-focused coping.** When people try to reduce their negative feelings about situations over which they have no control, they exercise emotion-focused strategies, including avoidance of such strategies altogether (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Some examples of those strategies include: eating comfort food, drinking alcohol, trying to get distracted/ keeping busy, seeking social support/ talking with others, praying, etc. (McLeod, 2015).

**Talking it out: family, friends, and international circles.** Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, who “Skyped with [his] parents daily,” found comfort in talking about his problems with people he cared about. Santiago “called [his parents] many times during the day,” and when he “created friends” in the United States, Santiago would talk to them as well.

Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, found comfort in “talking to [his] family and hanging out with a couple of Turkish people.” However, what really helped Braden in the times when he needed emotional support, was reaching out to his “girlfriend from Spain” because “through her, [he] was sort of able” to feel like he could “fit in the different environment” from his home country. Braden’s girlfriend “broadened the group of people” he “started hanging out with,” which in turn, made Braden more comfortable and made him feel more like he was “a part of the U.S. society.”

Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, “spoke to her significant other” in times of distress. She “vented to [her boyfriend] about how much [she] suffered,” even though he was “not very understanding” at times, which Abigail “hated.” She was thankful, however, that her boyfriend would “drive her places” and even helped her out financially when he
“paid for last two classes in the summer.” In addition to seeking emotional support from her boyfriend, Abigail admitted that she “cried when needed.”

Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, coped with continuous financial stress that stemmed from employment restrictions, through “networking,” specifically by “connecting with other international students.” She thought it was important for international students to “build a community of internationals” as those connections exposed them to an environment where “everyone [would] try to help … out.” “I don’t have American friends, not really … My friends are all international,” admitted Alexandra.

Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, coped with stress imposed on her by restrictive employment regulations, by talking to friends or “even a wall.” “You can’t keep all of that [stress] inside of you,” explained Gina. She stated that she “had to see [her] friends at least once a week to talk about how shitty [her] life was.” With her friends, Gina would “drink wine,” “laugh,” and “make fun of [her] stupid co-workers.”

**Praying.** Unlike Gina, Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, did not like “talking to people, especially strangers, about [her] problems.” Instead, she “mostly just stay[ed] to [her]self and pray[ed].” “I like to talk to God. I pray about everything,” admitted Meaghan. Ultimately, it was through church that she found strength to persevere and feel supported.

**Exercise.** Physical exercise, like “running, going to the gym, wrestling,” was the main coping strategy for Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece. However, he would also “discuss [his] problems with [his] girlfriend” and talk to his “mentor from [X-City in New England] who now live[d] in Athens” in times of distress. In addition, Caleb took on a volunteering role as a wrestling coach where he was “mentoring high school kids.” He explained that by talking to kids, he would actually “find ways to solve [his] own problems.”
Ultimately, being able to “make a difference” while “exercising” at the same time, made Caleb “happy.”

For Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, whose main coping strategy was “talking to people,” physical self-care was also very important. She stated that “relaxing, sleeping, working out, and running” helped her a lot in dealing with stress. Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan, also mentioned that “meditation, sports, and being active” was her golden key to remaining calm. Additionally, Stella admitted that she “dealt with issues through telling [her]self ‘it’s ok, it is what it is’,” as she was continuously trying to reassure herself that things would get better eventually.

**Self-reassurance, optimism, resilience.** Derek, former F-1 student from China, shared that his coping strategies included continuous self-reflection and positive self-reassurance in addition to exercising, shopping, eating, dating, and talking to his parents:

> When I feel like shit, I go back to myself and reflect: I’m mentally healthy, so I can still hang on. I go to work out to relieve stress; I buy bags; I eat fruits; I go on dates; I talk to my parents.

Derek clarified that by utilizing those techniques, he would “mislead [him]self” in the times of distress. By convincing himself that he was “being loved” and that “[his] life [wa]s actually good,” Derek “felt relieved, better.” He added that he remained “confident no matter what, even though it’s hard.” Derek explained what specifically helped him remain confident, by referring to a proverb that he lived by:

> There is a proverb: if you poop over a big pit, you sit there, you poop. If you fall into a poop pit, you still stand up. That means if you are already in shit, you are still confident because you are still standing. It’s just your feet that are covered in shit, not the whole body. What I’m saying is that even though I have a shitty job, I’m still learning a lot. I’m getting to know so many people. I’m learning solutions to different problems.
Similarly, Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, coped with immigration-policies-related stress through “self-assurance” as well. She “kept telling [her]self that it was [her] decision,” and she “took the responsibility.” Leila “had a goal,” and she knew she would find ways of achieving it. In addition, she felt that even if she was not going to find a job upon graduation, “having a degree from the U.S. would be great regardless of whether [she] could stay here [in the United States] or not.”

In the same vein, Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, used “self-motivation” as a coping strategy. She called herself “phoenix” because she was able “to rise again and again through self-motivation.” Kat elaborated:

_I kept telling myself that I’m doing it to have a better life. Nothing comes easy. Life has to be difficult in order to appreciate it. In fact, I never told my family about my struggles cause they wouldn’t be able to do anything from far away anyways._

Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, also identified her coping strategies being “self-motivation” and “self-persuasion.” Olivia’s position was “to just keep going.” “I had to continue doing what I was doing because it would end one day,” elaborated Olivia. “I sucked it up and continued focusing on the bigger picture,” she concluded.

Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, tried to remain positive by reassuring herself that “worst case scenario, if [she] didn’t get the papers, [she]’d go back to school” and continue remaining in F-1 status, while “hoping that someone would give [her] a job” eventually. Additionally, Charlize sought emotional support from “friends” and “general networking.”

Ash, former F-1 student from India, who “always felt like [he] had emotional support from [his] family” and, therefore, “had confidence that everything was going to work out,” “stayed strong” in situations of distress, particularly when he was having difficulties with
finding an OPT job. Ash stated that “optimism” was the “key word [he] lived by.” He elaborated:

In the end of the day, it’s about being practical .... I’m positive. In the end of the day, my mind will tell me ‘it is all going to be good’. When parents ask me whether I’m going to get a green card and get married, I don’t have an answer. I prefer to keep an open mind, and it helps me to stay positive. I’m open to all opportunities.

For Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, “staying optimistic” and “pushing through” were also identified as his major coping strategies. In addition, he received emotional support from his “friends and girlfriend who [was] now [his] wife.”

Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, admitted that being “resilient” was in her blood. Celine regarded her “Colombian background” as an ultimate determinant of her ability to cope with the stress she had endured during her F-1 journey. “We [Colombians] had 50 years of war, we had to become resilient,” elaborated Celine. She also mentioned that despite her father having had been “kidnapped there [in Colombia]” one time, she was currently at peace because ultimately, “no one got killed.” Additionally, Celine sought “psychological support” from her family and “good friends in the U.S.” during difficult times.

Acceptance. For Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, Zayden, former F-1 student from Burkina Faso, and Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, coping was a mere acceptance of the fact that nothing was in their control. “You do what you have to do,” said Ian. “Just follow the rules, nothing you can do,” stated Zayden. “You get what you pay for,” echoed Jack. The same technique was utilized by Jaden, an F-1 student from India, who knew that he had to “accept the reality of life and understand that it [was] how it [was]” in order to keep himself “sane.” Jaden metaphorized his coping strategy as being able to “gamify [his] life.” He elaborated:
Act like top of the food chain. Don’t be a prey animal. If you are so annoying to someone, they are the prey animal, not you.

Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, also stated that her coping mechanism was to take everything that was happening to her as a result of employment restrictions as “a norm.” She “just worked … because [she] had a lot of international friends who also worked” and did not want to stress much about it. “I took it as a norm,” said Tatiana, and merely accepted that there was not much she could do to change the situation she was in.

**Distraction.** Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, found distraction helpful when he needed to cope with difficulties related to finding an OPT job. He “distracted [him]self by hanging out with friends, working out, drinking, and studying very hard.” Kalvin noted that the latter technique was especially valuable because by focusing on “getting good grades,” he felt like he was not only keeping his mind off of job-related worries, but he also genuinely believed that he was building a potential advantage point “in the face of such unfair policies.” “Getting good grades does matter in the U.S. You can put that in your resume, it’s a plus point,” elaborated Kalvin. “Even though people say that grades don’t matter, I think they do,” he added.

Kalvin’s compatriot Daniel, an F-1 student from Indonesia, “played video games with roommates and drank [alcohol]” during the time when he felt hopeless about getting an OPT job. This was a great way of distraction for Kalvin. And Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, whose main coping strategy was “sharing” her problems with her “boyfriend,” also noted that finding ways to “distract [her]self” from everything that was going on, was equally important. Abigail said that she “distract[ed] [her]self by hanging out with friends” and “drinking wine” to relieve stress.
**Problem-focused coping.** When individuals perceive problems as solvable and can think of the steps that need to be taken to reduce their stress levels, they engage in problem-focused activities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), such as targeting the root of the problem, working on a solution, exercising better time-management, etc. (McLeod, 2015).

**Working out solutions.** Peter, former F-1 student from India, was definitely someone who dealt with his problems strategically, rather than emotionally, specifically during the time when he “lost [his] job” and needed the money to “stay in school for status” and be able to “pay for [his] other expenses.” Peter “borrowed money from friends,” “network[ed]” to learn about potential job opportunities and kept looking for “loopholes” within the law to be able to achieve his goal of staying in the United States and continue working. Eventually, Peter found that “loophole” he had been looking for:

> I transferred to a community college, even though I already had two master’s. I argued that I wanted to study IT and start from scratch, but it really was just a cheap way of staying in status. Then, when money became really tough, I had to borrow money from friends and transferred to … a language school. Yup, that’s how bad it was. I had to pretend I’m learning English to keep my F-1 status.

As staying in school for status was becoming more and more ridiculous to Peter, he reached out to his best friend for a solution. Peter’s “friend, who was a U.S. citizen, suggested that he marry [him] for a green card, do a gay marriage.” “We even applied for a marriage certificate,” admitted Peter as he was laughing. “But his [friend’s] girlfriend freaked out …, she needed a green card too,” continued Peter. So, that idea did not work out, but Peter still managed to find a solution. He elaborated:

> We were roommates with my best friend and his girlfriend, and we also had another girl living with us. So, after hearing all this drama, she was like, hey, I don’t even want to get married anyways, so I’ll help you out and marry you for a green card. So, we got married.
Years later, Peter and his wife were still married. They ended up falling in love with each other, and “everything worked out.” Peter was now a U.S. citizen, had a lucrative job, was happily married, and was “not planning on getting divorced.”

Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, admitted that her go-to coping strategies were always tied to “seeking solutions …, staying strong …, and never giv[ing] up.” Tina acknowledged that even though her F-1 journey had been and still was “very stressful,” she preferred to focus on the solutions rather on her emotions. Tina elaborated:

I piled my body with so much stress …. I was physically feeling it, but I had to keep going. I coped well because even though I was stressed, I always found ways around the policies.

Tina also shared that “after a couple of years, [her] family … started meeting friends from Mongolia,” which boosted her spirits. “I even became an informal advisor to the newcomers,” she added.

**Strategic social outreach.** James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, relied on “friends, family, and Latin-American community” during the times of distress. When James broke his leg and spent all of his savings on medical bills, he started looking for work. He reached out to his “Bolivian friend” from school for advice, and that friend helped James find a job immediately. Then, at the construction site, where James was initially making 18 dollars an hour, he met an “Argentinian guy” who “needed help with tiles.” And it was through his Argentinian co-worker that James was then able to learn new skills, “like soap stonework” and get a job “building stuff from stone” that paid “20 dollars an hour.”

Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam, shared that she would always approach stressful situations from an analytical point of view. She “thought of alternatives and worst case scenarios” and acted accordingly. Tess already had experience of living and working
abroad when she held a job in Dubai for five years. So, dealing with immigration and work-related issues was “not anything new” to her. “If I went back to Dubai or Vietnam, it would be ok,” stated Tess. “But you know, I was able to stay here,” she admitted. Tess married a U.S. citizen, and that “saved [her] from the unnecessary stress.” Tess was now happily married, was raising a child, and worked at a great “medical devices company” making good money.

Upton, former F-1 student from Turkey, unlike Tess, ended up getting his green card through his employer, who had filed an employment-based immigration petition for him after having had sponsored him for an H-1B visa. Nevertheless, Upton was similarly analytical in his coping approach towards difficult situations. What he did was “talk with friends and other people who went through the process” in order to obtain first-hand knowledge about the steps he had to take to get to his goal of finding a job in the United States, which would then enable him to stay in the country. Through networking, Upton was able to do multiple internships, which introduced him to the right people, who then, ultimately, connected him to “the long-term job” he was happy with.

**Taking advantage of existing opportunities.** Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, was definitely a problem-solver in her coping strategies as well. Having a clear understanding of what she had available in front of her, Bina was “good at using what [she] had”:

*I’m living on savings, on food stamps .... I get free clothing ... at Goodwill, yard sales ...., I use any available resources that are available for free. If I was from a rich family, I’d just call my family, but it’s the opposite. My mom is the one who needs help and has expectations that I’m gonna help.*

Kruz, former F-1 student from Czech Republic, admitted that he sought “financial support” from his “host family,” who was also “very supportive emotionally.” Kruz said that “they [host family] were well-off and had the capacity to help [him] financially.” So, when
he expressed interest in adjusting his nonimmigrant J-1 status to F-1 to be able to attend a university, his host family gladly agreed to help. In addition, Kruz mentioned that his “friends were there for [him]” when he needed advice. He was able to find many ways to successfully “navigate through difficulties” thanks to his networking skills.

Bianca, former F-1 student from Honduras, already had a family in the United States when she originally entered the country on a B1/B2 tourist visa. “I had family here who supported me,” admitted Bianca. Therefore, her coping strategies revolved around seeking both financial and emotional support from her family. Bianca had a plan, and her family knew of solutions to her immigration status adjustment, which she strategically utilized to her advantage.

Unlike Bianca, Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, had “nobody to support [him].” On the contrary, Zack “was the one supporting [his] father.” “I was like, ‘hey, if we have to move back, we’ll move back’,” said Zack to his father when they encountered H-1B visa renewal problems. However, Zack did not want to let his father down, who wished his son a better future, a life in the United States with opportunities to grow and develop. Zack worked four different jobs to save money to pay for college when he was in the process of adjusting his H-4 status to F-1. And eventually, Zack’s “wife played a significant role in supporting [his] immigration situation.” His now-wife-then-girlfriend, who was a U.S. citizen (let’s name her Debbie) and Zack were just teenagers when everything was happening, but their love was strong, and “she [Debbie] convinced [him] to stay.” Today, over a decade later, Zack and Debbie were still happily married, were raising a child together, and Zack was very successful in his career.
Inability or lack of need to cope. Coping refers to one’s ability to decrease negative outcomes (Heffer & Willoughby, 2017), however not everyone has that ability. A couple of student participants stated that they did not have any coping mechanisms handy; in other words, they did not know how to cope with stress. Whereas some student respondents also identified that they did not have the need to cope with stress to begin with, or that they were able to avoid the need to deal with potentially difficult situations related to immigration work policies altogether. Indeed, since coping is generally analyzed within the context of stress, individuals who are not experiencing stress, might not even need to think of any coping skills (Heffer & Willoughby, 2017).

Lack of coping mechanisms. When individuals do not have appropriate coping abilities, they are prone to experience anxiety or depression (Negi, Khanna, & Aggarwal, 2019). For example, Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova, confessed that she experienced a “major depression” when she was trying to find an OPT job after she had graduated. “Before OPT, I was set. My parents were taking care of me,” admitted Anya, but “then, [once I graduated] it was on. I had to start building my own life,” she shared. Anya was not prepared to be an adult at that moment and simply did not know what to do and how to cope with something that she never had to deal with before in her life:

I wasn’t really prepared for that. It was difficult. I was depressed. I couldn’t even understand what was going on with me, so I didn’t know how to cope with something that I didn’t even know I was dealing with. The H-1B application, ... while it was pending ... gave me hope for a little bit, but then it went away ... when it [H-1B application] was denied.

Similarly, Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, did not know how to cope with F-1-regulations-imposed stress either. “You just sit at home and do nothing. There is no coping mechanism,” sighed Rachael, who had developed “major anxiety” during her years spent in
the United States. Being so far away from her son, who lived with his dad in Saudi Arabia, was a major stressor that Rachael had no way of coping with; she did not want to have to choose between being with her son and finishing a PhD.

**Lack of need to cope.** For Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, his church played a significant role during his F-1 journey. The family Nathan once met at church, offered to take him in and take care of all of his financial needs. So, instead of coping, Nathan ended up accepting the opportunity he had been blessed with and utilizing his host family’s support as a straightforward solution to his otherwise inevitable problems that would come along with being in a nonimmigrant status in the United States.

Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, found comfort in her then-boyfriend-now-husband who was a U.S. citizen. “If it wasn’t for my husband, I would have given up for sure,” she confessed. Despite feeling “privileged because [she] had an American boyfriend,” who she had met the same week she arrived in the United States, and because she “spoke good English,” Mirah still felt “miserable” when she was a nonimmigrant F-1 student. For example, she couldn’t “get a cell phone because [she] didn’t have a social security number.” Mirah also could not get a credit card because “there were days when banks wouldn’t even open accounts for Iranians.” “I didn’t really cope with a lot of this stuff. I wanted to give up all the time,” she admitted. Ultimately, however, everything worked out thanks to her marriage to a U.S. citizen, which gave her the right to work and, therefore, courage and ability to “fight for [her]self.”

**Discrepancy Between Goals and Means: F-1 Students’ Adaptive Behaviors**

When individuals strive to achieve their goals and realize that the ways of achieving those goals are non-existent, they develop certain behavioral patterns that enable them to
cope with the pressure caused by the obstacles (Merton, 1938). The barriers to achieving goals, result in emotional tension that in turn, requires people to seek ways of coping with those unsettling feelings (Carver & Scheier, 2008). Student participants’ views on their coping strategies represented above, were their own perceptions. However, based on the student respondents’ real-life stories, shared in Chapter 4, it was evident that there was a clear divergence between the participants’ own perceptions on coping and their factual behaviors.

Coping mechanisms identified by most student respondents (66%) were emotion-focused ones, with only 23.5% of the participants referring to problem-focused coping, and 10.5% – identifying with the lack of ability or else the need to cope with stress in the first place. Empirical data obtained from student participants outside the scope of the discussions about their coping techniques, however, showed that most respondents, in fact, acted on their problems and did not just accept them as reality. I, therefore, conclude that my interviewees did not give themselves enough credit for what they experienced during their F-1 journeys and how much more resilient and innovative they actually were in their ways of trying to find solutions to seemingly impossible-to-overcome obstacles.

I hereby present an analysis of student participants’ behavioral patterns by utilizing Merton’s (1938) typology of adaptation models: conformity, ritualism, retreatism, rebellion, and innovation. By analyzing my student respondents’ adaptive mechanisms through the prism of this typology, I was able to focus on the social pressures imposed on them by the U.S. employment-related immigration policies and ultimately evaluate the strategies my student respondents utilized to achieve their goals in the face of those restrictive policies. See
Figure 9 in Appendix F for the visual summary of Merton’s adaptation typology in application to international F-1 students.

**Conformity.** Mere acceptance of the absence of the means of achieving one’s goals is the most common adaptive strategy that is characterized by individuals’ total compliance with the rules set out within society (Merton, 1938). Considering data obtained from the stories shared with me by the student participants about their life journeys as F-1 students living and working in the United States, while disregarding their own perceptions on utilized coping mechanisms, I would conclude that only about ten (26%) out of the total of 38 student participants exerted conformist-style behaviors.

Most, but not all of those conformist-participants, did suggest that acceptance and other emotion-focused coping, was indeed what they had settled for. For example, Zayden, former F-1 student from Burkina Faso, really did accept employment-related immigration policies as something that he had no control over. He was not frustrated with them, and simply followed the rules. Similarly, Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, also chose to follow the social order, despite vehemently disagreeing with the policies, and did everything by the book without deviation. Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, accepted the laws as well and did not attempt to break through the wall of obstacles set out in front of him. When needed, Kalvin distracted himself by talking to friends and diligently focused on studies. In the same vein, Bianca, former F-1 student from Honduras, also decided to conform with the socially constructed norm and did not fight the system. Bianca did what she was legally allowed to do as an F-1 student: she worked on campus and focused on studies. So did Jaden, an F-1 student from India, Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, Caleb, an F-1 student
from Greece, Upton, former F-1 student from Turkey, Maya, former F-1 student from Russia, and Daniel, an F-1 student from Indonesia.

**Ritualism.** Where people understand how unrealistic and inaccessible their goals, culturally defined as success, are, they choose to either lower their standards or eliminate their goals altogether, ultimately deciding to follow the rules (Merton, 1938). Different from conformity, ritualism is an adaptive strategy utilized by people who do not accept reality yet end up adjusting the perception of what success means to them. Like conformists, ritualists also ultimately decide to comply with institutionally structured regulations, yet they do not accept them as moral or just. Four (10.5%) out of 38 student participants exerted ritualist-style behaviors.

For example, Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, did not at all agree with immigration policies on work restrictions outlined by the U.S. government for F-1 students. However, he chose to just follow the rules, mainly, of course, because he did not have the financial pressure to break them due to his luck with the host-family-adoption situation. But Nathan also admitted that he was “scared of U.S. immigration policies” and did not want to “deal with the lawyers,” having ultimately decided that he would just “move to Canada” upon graduation.

Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, originally “never planned” to come to the United States to go to school because she already had an established family and a career in her home country. However, since Tina was “embarrassed” by the fact that she “didn’t know English” that was highly required at her job, once she learned about the opportunity to study in the United States from her friend, she “took the chance.” As years went by, Tina realized that her kids, who she had brought with her to the United States, had “better opportunities here [in the
United States] than in Mongolia,” and being an F-1 student by no means allowed her to secure their financial well-being due to the restrictive immigration policies. What Tina did, was she changed the trajectory from focusing on her own success-goals to ensuring the success of her children. Tina followed the rules, only undertook legally-allowed jobs, and kept herself in school, which enabled her to prolong her F-1 status. Tina’s children were now adults and had been able to become permanent residents through employment-based petitions. By redirecting her focus from self to children, Tina could now finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. Now, as soon as at least one of her children became a U.S. citizen, they could sponsor her green card through family-reunification-based adjustment of status.

Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, really wanted to work off campus to “gain experience in [her] field of study” and “network,” however restrictive immigration policies stood in the way of her aspirations. Since working without authorization was too “scary” for Meaghan “with current administration,” she coped with stress by reassuring herself that she “would be way more sad in Nigeria, then here [in the United States].” Meaghan lowered her aspirations for the sake of her own sanity. She took on a volunteering job, where she was “making phone calls.” When “people sp[oke] fast on the phone,” she found it frustrating; nevertheless, she chose to “deal with it,” as taking on an unpaid internship was “at least something.”

Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania and a young mother, had to reevaluate the meaning she had originally assigned to success-goals. Having realized that as an F-1 student and a full-time mother, getting a job off campus in her field of study was nearly impossible, Bina redirected her focus from the big goals to the immediate needs. Bina’s priority was her
son’s well-being, so she was using “any available resources that [were] available for free,” such as “food stamps” and “Goodwill.”

**Retreatism.** Rejection of both goals and means is the least common behavioral mode, characterized by one’s total disagreement with both traditionally desired goals within a society as well as the means towards their achievement (Merton, 1938). As a result, such people cannot cope with the institutional order and simply choose to escape from it altogether (Merton, 1938). Only one student participant (2.5%) rejected both goals, culturally defined as success, as well as the institutionally constructed means of achieving them. Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, simply “[di]dn’t care about anything.” He did not want to come to the United States, did not want to study, did not want to work, and barely had any passions. When Jack was not at school or at his job that his uncle had forced him to obtain, he would just isolate himself from society by playing video games or trying out other activities, such as “learning how to code” or how to “play drums,” in which he would “quickly lose interest” and, therefore, had no further motivation to master.

**Rebellion.** When individuals disagree with both socially constructed aspirations that define success as well as the institutionally restrained means towards their achievement, they “attempt to introduce a ‘new social order’” (Merton, 1938, p.678). None of the student participants in my sample founded any grassroot movements or attempted to implement change. Although the majority wanted to see change within current employment-related immigration policies, they did not act upon it. In addition, all but one individual in my sample (Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan) agreed with the socially defined meaning of success, traditionally composed of factors related to one’s social and economic well-being.
Therefore, they would not be described as having rebellious adaptive behaviors according to Merton’s typology.

**Innovation.** In cases where individuals have specific goals but are denied the means of attaining “economic or any other type of highly valued ‘success’” (Merton, 1938, p.678), people become frustrated with legal inaccessibility to opportunities and, therefore, seek alternative ways of working towards achievement of their goals (Merton, 1938). According to my calculations, at least 60.5% of my student sample chose not to conform with the legal regulations outlined for them by the U.S. government, having sought illegitimate, in other words – innovative, pathways towards achieving their objectives.

For example, Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, who earlier identified her coping strategy as mere acceptance of the social order, in reality, engaged in adaptive behaviors that were completely opposite to conformity. In the story about her F-1 journey, Tatiana demonstrated numerous techniques that she had utilized in her continuous fight with the immigration system. Not only she was able to adjust her J-1 status to F-1 by enrolling into school, Tatiana was also able to find an under-the-table job to pay her way through the entire academic program. Eventually, she even figured out how to receive financial assistance from the school she was attending. Tatiana fought her way through towards an H-1B visa and then found a way to transfer that visa to a more reputable company to secure her financial growth. She worked very hard. By no means I would call that behavior conformist.

Next, Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, who identified her coping strategy as seeking emotional support from friends and family. That young woman went through hell in her fight towards her dream. Celine attended and paid for two schools at the same time: one for education, and one for the F-1 status. She experienced harassment from her
employers, where she had to work for cash due to lack of work authorization. Celine even found a pathway to stay in the United States through marriage, in which she was miserable. In my eyes, this young bright woman was a fighter who did everything in her limited powers to achieve her goals. Had Celine not been strategically acting on removing the obstacles set in front of her by the immigration policies, she would have not been where she was today. Simply talking to friends and family was not what got Celine to her goals; it was her strong character and perseverance that got her there. There are so many stories like that, all of which are depicted earlier in Chapter 4.

Ultimately, most of the student participants who I interviewed, in fact, acted on their aspirations and did not just turn to conformity. Having had to break immigration laws, having had to work for cash while living in constant fear of being caught, having had to find loopholes within the policies, doing everything they possibly could to achieve their goals, those individuals were resilient, strong, perseverant, and hard-working. That being said, the reason behind their innovative behavioral patterns undertaken in face of employment-related immigration policies, was the indisputable discrepancy between the ends and means.

Definitively, the social order that unduly exerts pressure on certain groups of people by limiting their “possible recourse to approved means”, where “treaties become scraps of paper”, is the one that “abrogates international law” (Merton, 1938, p.681). Thus, empirical findings obtained from the student participants’ stories about their coping experiences in the face of restrictive policies, only reaffirmed the validity of the argument presented within Chapter 2, where I addressed the issue of current F-1 employment-related immigration policies’ misalignment with the intrinsic values outlined within the UDHR (UNGA, 1948).
See Table 7 below for a comparison of student participants’ self-identified coping strategies with their adaptive behaviors analyzed through Merton’s typology.

Table 7

**Student Participants: Self-Identified Coping Strategies VS Adaptive Behaviors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Identified Coping</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Factual Adaptive Behaviors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotion-Focused</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Focused</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Coping</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>Ritualism</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Need</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>Retreatism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Students’ Reflections on Their F-1 Journeys: What Now?**

In my discussions with student participants, I was curious to learn whether they would have encountered similar challenges had they never come to the United States to begin with and were still living in their home countries. Another inquiry I wanted to investigate was whether my study participants wanted to return to their home countries upon expiration of their F-1 status in cases where they were currently in an F-1 status. In cases of former F-1 students, who were now either H-1B workers, green cards holders or U.S. citizens, my inquiry referred to whether they wanted to move back to their home country at any point of time in the future.

**What would be different had student participants never come to the United States.** Eighty-nine percent of student respondents said that they would have never had to experience the challenges they had encountered during their F-1 journeys had they stayed in their home countries. While some individuals focused on specific obstacles they could have had avoided, others also emphasized that had they stayed in their home countries, they would have most definitely had encountered some other type of challenges. Eight percent of the
respondents found it difficult to respond to the ‘what if’ question, and one respondent thought that nothing would be different had they stayed in their home country.

**No language or cultural barriers.** For Kruz, former F-1 student from Czech Republic, the “language” aspect would not have been a problem in his home country. However, aside from his “lack of English knowledge,” Kruz thought that nothing else would be any different. Similarly, Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, stated that had she never moved to the United States, she would have never had to deal with the “language in classes,” which was “hard to understand” during her interactions with “American classmates.” Since Abigail was the only international student in her program, she “was scared to participate” in classroom conversations “because [she] didn’t have the vocabulary” and “didn’t want to sound stupid.” This would have definitely not been the case in Abigail’s home country, as she was proficient in Spanish.

Bianca, former F-1 student from Honduras, also identified “language and communication barriers” as being a challenge that she “wouldn’t [otherwise] have to deal with in [her] home country.” For Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, the “language … was a little hard in the beginning,” something that he would not have had a problem with had he gone to school in Indonesia. “But it’s [the language barrier] typical,” admitted Kalvin.

Similarly, Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, stated that he “wouldn’t have any language difficulties” in Morocco, whereas in the United States “people weren’t patient with … [his] accent …, and encounters with Americans were awkward.”

Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, was also “struggling with language” as an international student in the United States, something that he would have never had to experience had he stayed in Turkey. And Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, echoed
Braden by admitting that “going to school in [Colombia]” would have definitely been “much easier because of the language.”

Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, said that “language [was] the most difficult” challenge for him in the United States as well, and had he stayed in his home country, he would have never had problems with “communications skills.” In addition, Jack admitted that he struggled with his “[in]ability to make friends” due to the cultural differences. “I don’t like to have empty conversations,” stated Jack. “I would have never experienced these problems [back home],” he concluded. Morris, an F-1 student from Morocco, also mentioned cultural barriers as something that he would not have had to experience had he gone to school in his home country. “I had a real culture shock when I first arrived,” admitted Morris. “It was difficult,” he added.

Finally, for Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, cultural barrier was something that still bothered her. Olivia elaborated:

To this day I feel cultural differences, I still don’t understand the jokes. The immigrant stigma will always stay with you because some values will always stay with you. There is always gonna be that hint, feeling of being an immigrant. At work people joke, quote movies, I have no idea what they are talking about.

Ultimately, Olivia recognized that had she never moved to the United States, having to deal with cultural difference would be something that she would have otherwise never had to experience in her home country.

No work restrictions. For Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, Upton, former F-1 student from Turkey, and James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, work restrictions would not be something that they would have to deal with in their home countries. “Finding summer internships was difficult,” shared Upton. “I wouldn’t have to work in construction under the table if I broke my leg in Bolivia,” James stated.
Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, also expressed his frustration with “job insecurity and uncertainty it brought.” Caleb admitted that if “[he] had that … in Greece, [he]’d just live with [his] family,” something he did not have an option to do in the United States when faced with restrictions on F-1 student employment. Jaden, an F-1 student from India, recognized that work restrictions would not be a problem in his home country either:

*Not being able to work without restrictions was a challenge that I would not have if I lived in India … but living in India is not an option. I hate it!*

In the same vein, Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam, acknowledged that “in Vietnam and Dubai [she] wouldn’t have problems with work.” However, she also admitted that if “you are looking for a job in the U.S., you have to be prepared” and always keep “two key things” in mind: “first, you need to understand what employers are looking for; second, you have to know how to make yourself unique.”

Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, stated that “[she] could just work anywhere [she] want[ed]” in Colombia. “I honestly haven’t seen international people in Colombia having the same struggle like they have here [in the United States],” shared Gina. “In Colombia, you just go to school and work at the same time,” she added. The most frustrating part for Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, and something that would never be a problem had he stayed in his home country, was the fact that “[he] had to pay for unnecessary education to keep [his] F-1 status to be able to work under CPT.” Richard stated that this would have never been the case in Italy. Work restrictions would have not been a challenge for Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, either:

*Not having the freedom to work … is the most difficult part. If I stayed in Chile, I wouldn’t have the same struggle. I didn’t come from a family that was struggling.*
Due to restrictive employment-related immigration policies, Kat “was always short of money.” “I never had money to do anything. I sometimes didn’t have money to eat,” she confessed.

**Problems would be different.** A number of student participants admitted that even though they would not have similar challenges in their home countries, they would still have problems, but those problems would just be of different nature. For example, Derek, former F-1 student from China, admitted that even though “[he] wouldn’t have problems with work sponsorship,” he “would not be able to enjoy life as an openly gay person in China.” Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, said that even though she “would not have paper-related problems” in Colombia, she would “still be unhappy in [her] home country because [her] boyfriend live[d] in the U.S.”

Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, stated that although she would not have had the same issues that she had experienced as an F-1 student in the United States, she would have had other, perhaps, even bigger problems:

> It would be different because I am a citizen in Ukraine. However, as a woman, I wouldn’t be able to build a good career. And I didn’t want to be just a teacher. My ambitions were bigger than that.

Similarly, Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, stated that although “work restrictions wouldn’t be an issue,” there “[WE]RE no jobs in Burkina Faso,” so he would have had to deal with even bigger challenges, something he had been running away from for many years to begin with. Likewise, Peter, former F-1 student from India, also admitted that he “would not have issues related to the right to work,” but that he would “then … [not] have similar opportunities” with regard to employment and economic mobility.
“If I stayed in my home country, I’d have different problems,” echoed Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan. She specifically mentioned “lack of opportunity” and “feeling of just settling for less” as challenges that she would have had to overcome had she remained in Kyrgyzstan. “I can’t imagine living there,” confessed Olivia. Similarly, for Tina, an F-1 student Mongolia, “having to worry about the money” would not be a problem in her home country, however she “wanted [her] kids to have a better future.” Tina specifically wanted her children to receive their education in the United States because “they would … learn more transferrable skills here.” “In Mongolia, they [children] wouldn’t have that opportunity.” In addition, Tina noted the following:

*The mentality of living in a developing country is that you have to leave it, and even now, when I go to Mongolia, everyone is like, don’t come here.*

Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, listed two main challenges that would be different from those he had encountered in the United States. First, Zack would “probably struggle with discrimination because [he]’d be an ethnic minority.” The second “struggle would be associated with the standard of living there [in Kazakhstan].” Zack elaborated that even if “[he]’d be higher upper class,” he would still have a “lower standard of living there even with that status” and would “have to limit [him]self.” Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, also stated that “[she]’d probably have different issues” had she stayed in her home country. Charlize admitted that although “[she] wouldn’t have work restrictions,” she would “already have three kids by now … with no job to support them,” an idea that was echoed by her compatriot Tatiana, another former F-1 student from Russia. Tatiana elaborated:

*This is what you do in Russia: get education, job, marriage, kids. So, no fun ..., and it is hard to find work.*
Similarly, Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, was confident that had she stayed in her home country, “[she] d be pregnant with three children there by now” or else “be living with [her] parents.” “You don’t leave the house until you are married,” Gina explained.

Finally, Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, also admitted that even though “[he] wouldn’t have been away from [his] parents … and wouldn’t have felt any disadvantages,” he would then be “dealing with all the crisis,” which would prevent him from moving forward with his career aspirations.

Problems would be the same. Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, admitted that even though he “wouldn’t be struggling with language,” if he “went to a different city in Turkey, [he] would still experience similar issues with changing the location.” In Braden’s mind, all of the challenges that he had experienced in the United States were not country-specific but were universal issues that anyone would encounter had they moved anywhere. Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, also noted that what would be the same in his home country with regard to challenges, was “expensive rent.” “[X-City in New England] is SO expensive,” shared Kalvin, who also admitted that rent in Indonesia was just as unreasonably priced. Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, echoed Kalvin by saying that “the situations were kind of similar … with rent” both in her home country and the United States. “But I don’t like the corruption in Nigeria,” admitted Meaghan, justifying her decision to stay in the United States despite the similar challenges both countries were exhibiting.

When Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan, was applying for an F-1 visa back in the day, her biggest motivation was to “run away from [her] abusive father” and to avoid a life in a patriarchic society [Uzbekistan] where men had no respect for women. However, when Stella moved to the United States, she got into a relationship with an “American,” who
“reminded [her] of [her] father a lot” because “he [ex-boyfriend] was struggling with anxiety and had anger rages.” Stella admitted that “now that [she] look[ed] back,” she thought that it was her who had “insecurity issues” and that ultimately, her perceived challenges back home equated to the ones she had experienced in the United States.

**They would be different people.** In her reflection on “what if,” Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova, admitted that “if [she] stayed in Moldova, problems would be different.” However, more importantly, Anya herself “would be different.” “Coming here changed me for better completely,” she elaborated. “If I stayed there [Moldova], I’d be a different person,” said Anya in conclusion. Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, echoed Anya by stating that her experience in the United States turned her into a completely different person:

*Honestly, I became more independent here. I would be more spoiled and dependent on others if I stayed [in Saudi Arabia]. All the hardships in the U.S. made me a stronger person.*

Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco also said that his experience in the United States taught him “how to be independent.” “I don’t think I would have as much experience in life … I’d probably be still living with my parents,” concluded Ian.

Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, emphasized how life in the United States enabled her to “grow as a person” and “find [her] true self”:

*I wouldn’t be able to achieve those goals had I stayed in Chile. I wouldn’t grow as much of a strong person that I am today if I weren’t alone [stayed in Chile living with her family]. This experience made me fearless!*

Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, also felt empowered as a result of her experiences in the United States as an F-1 student:
I feel good because I’m moving forward .... It would be worse if I never came here [to the United States] and stayed [in Nigeria]. I am a better person now; I became a better person.

Finally, Daniel, an F-1 student from Indonesia, emphasized that even though “[he] didn’t think [he]’d have similar challenges” in his home country, he would have never had “become a completely different person.” “If I remained in my home country, one thousand percent, I’d be a different person,” contemplated Daniel. “I’d probably be rich now cause I had everything set up for me. But I don’t regret coming here,” he said in conclusion.

No idea/not sure/ nothing would be different. Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, “didn’t know” what it would be like for her now in Germany, her country of origin, or otherwise in Turkey, where she had spent almost a decade living with her ex-husband prior to coming to the United States. Similarly, Ash, former F-1 student from India, “couldn’t answer that question.” “I don’t like to think what could have happened,” admitted Ash. “I don’t focus on that,” he added.

Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, was not sure what it would be like for her had she never come to the United States either. “Sometimes I think no, sometimes I think yes. It depends,” she said. Bina elaborated that “some of [her] college friends went far with their careers” in Tanzania, so she did not necessarily think that she was better off in the United States. Yet Bina was “very optimistic that once [she was] done with [her] degree,” things would change, and she would have a better answer. And Maya, former F-1 student from Russia, thought that “nothing” would be different if she had stayed in Russia and did not want to elaborate on the topic.

Stummigration: to leave or to stay, that is the question. I am hereby introducing the term “stummigration”, a word that does not exist in the English language. Since the term
does not have an established use, I would like to provide a stipulative definition for it: Stumigration [ˌstǔməˈgreɪʃən] is a portmanteau word that is formed through a combination of the words “student” and “immigration”, where the beginning of the first word is clipped and appended to the end of the second word with its first letter omitted; from a semantic standpoint, stumigration is defined as either a process or an outcome of international students adjusting their nonimmigrant status to that of an immigrant one in their host country of study.

In my conversations with student participants, I discussed their intentions of going back to their home countries. Regardless of their current immigration status, my investigative inquiry focused on the reasons why my respondents wanted to leave the United States or, otherwise, why they wanted to stay. The data on student participants’ responses is hereby broken down into four categories to provide a more detailed analysis for each immigration status variable: current F-1 students; former F-1 students, now H-1B workers; former F-1 students, now U.S. permanent residents, and former F-1 students, now U.S. citizens.

**Current F-1 students.** Out of the total student participant sample (38), 12 (32%) were current F-1 students. Out of those 12 F-1 students, three stated that they were definitely moving back to their home countries upon expiration of their F-1 status. Three were still not sure, and six did not want to move back.

**Leaving.** Kalvin, an F-1 student from Indonesia, wanted to go back to Indonesia without a doubt. “I’m not gonna stay here and work until I’m 70 and then die,” he explained. “It’s a white culture thing. All that retirement stuff and shit,” elaborated Kalvin. Morris, an F-1 student from Morocco, was also “definitely planning to move back home after completing [his] master’s and working for a little while.” And for Rachael, an F-1 student from Saudi Arabia, the decision to move back was pretty straightforward as she had never
even once thought about staying in the United States. “I’m going back. My son, my parents are there,” explained Rachael.

_Not sure._ Daniel, an F-1 student from Indonesia, was not sure what to do. On the one hand, he wanted to stay in the United States, especially if his H-1B application got approved, but on the other hand, he knew that he would have to go back eventually, since he was “the only child,” Daniel elaborated:

_It’s wibble-wobble ... I’m the only child and need to go back to be with my parents and take care of their assets. Bringing them here is not an option._

Tina, an F-1 student from Mongolia, “[was not] 100% confident” about whether she would be able to stay in Mongolia in the first place, even if she decided to move back there at some point:

_My husband and I think about retiring there [in Mongolia], but I don’t think I will. If I do go, then maybe for one or two years to see if I can do it. I’m not confident that I’ll be able to do it though._

Alexandra, an F-1 student from Germany, was considering leaving the United States. “Maybe,” she said, but Alexandra did not want to go back to her home country. “I’d rather go to Ireland,” she admitted. “There are more opportunities there,” Alexandra suggested.

_Not going back._ Jaden, an F-1 student from India, was adamant about never going back to India. He “hated” his country, and felt like he no longer belonged there:

_No, absolutely not. India is horrible. There is nothing there. No friends. No family that I’m close to. There is nothing for me there. I’m Americanized now. For me, it would be coming back to nothing ... having everything and then coming back to nothing. Plus, it’s hot there, people are weird, my mom is annoying .... I want a much better life. Hopefully I can stay in the U.S._

Nathan, an F-1 student from Burkina Faso, was not going back to his home country either. “I want a better life for my kids,” justified Nathan. “It would be a life full of struggling back home,” he admitted.
Similarly, Meaghan, an F-1 student from Nigeria, also did not want to go back to her home country, at least “not now.” Yet she was considering going there when she was “maybe 60.” The reason she did not want to move back to Nigeria was “because [her] country had let [her] down in so many ways” that she “wanted to do better now.”

Caleb, an F-1 student from Greece, did “not really” want to move back to his home country because “it [was] better for [Caleb] and for [his] family to be here [in the United States].” Caleb noted that the one reason that he would ever want to go to Greece was if he got an opportunity “to mentor kids there.” Otherwise, staying in the United States for good was his current position.

Jack, an F-1 student from Kazakhstan, was not very talkative when it came to the question about whether he wanted to go back to Kazakhstan upon graduation or not. All Jack said was “No. Never.” Meanwhile, in our earlier discussions, Jack stated that he “didn’t care” where he lived, as to him, home meant “where [his] bed was.” He had also mentioned before, that if got “kicked out” of the United States, he would either go Uzbekistan, where his parents now resided, Kazakhstan, because that was the only country where he had a legal status, or Russia, since there, he would have a shot at getting his legal status because of his Russian ancestry.

Bina, an F-1 student from Tanzania, stated that she wanted to go back to her home country upon graduation “because [she would] be in a better financial position there.” However, Bina admitted that her desire to go back was always motivated by her current “financial frustrations” rather than being focused on the big picture. In reality, it was very unlikely that Bina was going to leave the United States because “[her] husband was here and [her] son was going to school.” “My husband … just started his PhD,” elaborated Bina.
“Yeah, for my son it’s better to stay here … because they have good schools, and he has all these opportunities,” she admitted.

**Former F-1 students, now H-1B workers.** Out of the total student participant sample (38), five (13%) identified as former F-1 students currently residing in the United States on an H-1B temporary work visa. Out of those five former-F-1-students-turned-H-1B-workers, two said “it depends” and three did not want to move back.

*It depends.* Ash, former F-1 student from India, although not immediately, did consider a possibility of moving back to India “maybe in ten to fifteen years.” For Ash, the decision to potentially move to his home country depended on whether he would be able to “make a lot of money to retire there [in India].” Ash specified that money-making was the main reason why he was currently staying in the United States:

*It depends on the opportunity in India. If it’s good enough, why not. It’s not only about the money, it’s about the opportunity in general. If it’s a good job that allows me to be close to my family, it’s a good opportunity.*

Another contributing factor that could influence Ash’s decision on whether to go back to India or stay in the United States, was of a personal matter: “It depends on who I get married to,” explained Ash.

Maya, former F-1 student from Russia, was also considering going back to her home country. She said “maybe,” as it all depended on how her immigration status was going to work out. She was currently on an H-1B visa, which did not give her the “full freedom,” therefore, she was just waiting to see what was going to happen with her company’s employment-based immigration petition that they had filed for her. Ultimately, Maya would “not be devastated” if she could not stay in the United States, as both countries, Russia and the United States, had their positive and negative aspects.
Not going back. Derek, former F-1 student from China, did not want to go back to his home country. “I’ve been here [in the United States] for so long” that I [no longer] have any connections with China,” explained Derek. “If I go back to China, I’d have a culture shock,” he elaborated. Derek admitted that he would “only think about China when [he was] depressed.” “Would my life be better in China?”, wondered Derek. “Maybe it would, in some ways,” he hypothesized. In reality, however, Derek knew that at the end of the day, he could only have “a good … peaceful life with no noise” in the United States as opposed to a life in China. Derek elaborated:

I want to stay here because neighbors are not close to you, not trying to influence you. I want privacy and personal space. My mom can live next to me, but not with me. I don’t want to tell my parents that I am gay because they will feel hurt, and that would hurt me. I stay away from all those things. In China, everyone knows everything. They know if you fight with your husband. Here [in the United States], it’s all about privacy. People don’t mind their own business in China.

Similarly, Ian, former F-1 student from Morocco, did not see himself moving back to his home country, unless “when [he would turn] 70 or something.” He justified his vision by admitting that he “like[d] [his] life in the U.S.”:

Hospitals are good, schools are good, and if you work hard enough, you can achieve things. Home [in Morocco], you can work twice as hard and barely pay bills. My uncle tried going back and live in Morocco for two years, and he couldn’t do it. He came back. My aunt and uncle got green card lotteries, and that’s how they ended up in America.

Finally, Santiago, former F-1 student from Venezuela, was confident about not wanting to move back to his home country, mainly for “political reasons.” “To be fair, look at Syria,” suggested Santiago as a comparative example. Putting aside the politico-economic crisis currently ongoing in Venezuela, however, Santiago still would not move there even everything was “perfect”: 
Even if it [political situation in Venezuela] was good and perfect, I still wouldn’t go because I went through so much here already! I would feel like going a level down.

Santiago also hypothesized that perhaps there was a possibility of him moving back to Venezuela “later, maybe if [he was] gonna open [his] business or have a family there.” Alternatively, he would consider moving elsewhere in South America, if he “married a girl from [his] culture.” “We’d just go to her country then,” explained Santiago.

**Former F-1 students, now U.S. permanent residents.** Out of the total student participant sample (38), 11 (29%) identified as former F-1 students currently holding a U.S. permanent resident/ green card status. Out of those 11 former-F-1-students-turned-green-card-holders, three were not sure whether they would eventually decide to move back to their home countries; two – intended to leave the United States at some point, and six – wanted to stay in the United States indefinitely.

*Maybe.* Although Leila, former F-1 student from Ukraine, stated that she did not necessarily want to move back to her home country, she would most definitely consider it if offered the right opportunity. Leila elaborated:

*I’ll move if they invite me to be a minister of education, which is very possible. Look at the new president! He is all for youth. Getting Ukrainians back to Ukraine is one of his agenda points.*

Braden, former F-1 student from Turkey, admitted that he always liked “keep[ing] [his] options open.” “You never know what’s gonna happen in ten years, and my wife is being supportive,” said Braden, suggesting that he might leave the United States eventually.

Similarly, Richard, former F-1 student from Italy, acknowledged that he “d[id]n’t have a strong attachment” to the United States and, therefore, considered moving back to Italy if he received “an opportunity to grow professionally in a particular sector” there.

Richard indicated that “it [professional opportunities] [wa]s the only thing that h[e]ld him
here [in the United States].” However, since Richard “never felt like [he] had strong social network” in the United States, that aspect “never kep[pt] him” from wanting to move back to his home country.

Leaving. Celine, former F-1 student from Colombia, confessed that she really wanted to go back and kept thinking about it “all the time.” The only thing that was currently preventing her from moving back to Colombia was her boyfriend, whose immigration status was pending, which prevented him from traveling in and out of the United States. Celine loved her boyfriend and wanted to be supportive, so she could not leave just yet.

Mirah, former F-1 student from Iran, stated that even though she knew that she “did[nt] want to stay in the United States,” she did not necessarily consider moving back to Iran being her only option:

*If I had to pick an ideal job, it doesn’t have to be in Iran. It can be in Morocco, Lebanon, or Iraq even.*

To some extent, however, Mirah felt “the obligation to go to Iran.” “If I don’t make Iran better, then who else will?”, she wondered. Though at the same time, Mirah was not sure that realistically, she would be able to “make it [Iran] better.” “I don’t know,” she admitted. Mirah elaborated:

*I do want to go to Iran ... yes, as a person who doesn’t rely on my family for everything ..., but only in that capacity, where I am independent. Plus, now my parents can’t really afford much.*

Staying. Gina, former F-1 student from Colombia, was not going back to her home country “because now [she] ha[d] a degree and papers here [in the United States].” In addition, Gina “did[nt] want to go to Colombia” because she was now married and did not want to leave her loved-one. Gina elaborated:
Now, all the doors are open for me, and I can do a lot. Before, I was so limited in everything, I was afraid of the police, I was afraid of getting a speeding ticket. Now, I don’t give a fuck anymore. Now, I can work anywhere, and I don’t have to explain myself with all my visa limitations. I also don’t want to go to Colombia because of my husband.

Bianca, former F-1 student from Honduras, did not want to move back to her home country either, having admitted that she would “go to [her] country only for a short period of time, basically for vacation.” Bianca’s entire family already lived in the United States, and everyone was happy, so there was no reason for her to move back to Honduras.

Abigail, former F-1 student from Colombia, did not want to go back to her home country “anytime soon cause [she was] gonna be miserable there and not get a job.” However, Abigail did consider moving back to her home country “when [she] retire[d].”

Similarly, Kruz, former F-1 student from Czech Republic, did not want to go back to his home country, at least “not at this point,” suggesting that he would maybe just move there for retirement, although “unlikely.”

Kat, former F-1 student from Chile, did not want to move back to her country, not even for retirement. “I’d retire in Thailand. Moneywise, it’s more than here [United States].” she specified. Kat also shared with me that even if she were to move back to Chile, she “would have a culture shock.” Kat elaborated:

When you spend so many years here, then you go back and it’s not really your place anymore.

Finally, Tatiana, former F-1 student from Russia, also was not planning on moving back to her home country. “Russia is corrupt, and there is no social protection,” she indicated. However, Tatiana would be ok with moving to “Europe” if she had to move somewhere.

**Former F-1 students, now U.S. citizens.** Out of the total student participant sample (38), ten (26%) identified as former F-1 students currently being U.S. citizens. Out of those
ten former-F-1-students-turned-U.S.-citizens, two – considered leaving the United States at some point, while eight were not going back to their home countries.

**Leaving.** Zack, former F-1 student from Kazakhstan, admitted that at some point he would have to move back to his home country. Zack explained that “the other part of [his] family [was] there [in Kazakhstan],” and he knew that “they [would] soon need to be taken care of.” Zayden, former F-1 student from Burkina Faso, also acknowledged that he would go back to his home country “at some point.” “I will go after I have solid experience [in the United States],” he explained.

**Not going back.** Anya, former F-1 student from Moldova, stated with confidence that she would never go “back to Moldova.” “No, I’m an alien there. I won’t be comfortable,” she explained. Anya shared with me that “last time [she] went there [Moldova], it was so sad, so Soviet.” Tess, former F-1 student from Vietnam, did not want to move back to her home country either. “No, not really. It’s too hot there [in Vietnam],” she chuckled. Stella, former F-1 student from Uzbekistan, also was not planning on moving back to her home country:

*I’m going back to visit for the first time in eleven years next week. I can’t even imagine what it’s like there now. I don’t want to live there though.*

Charlize, former F-1 student from Russia, although feeling tempted to stay in Russia “every time [she] [went] back,” admitted to having that feeling of temporary euphoria quickly go away. Charlize said that when she goes back to her home country, she “meet[s] with her classmates, get[s] inspired,” but then she realizes that if she were to stay in “Moscow,” she would “have to build [her] life from scratch” there. Ultimately, Charlize would only go to “Moscow … because it’s beautiful … but only for a vacation.”

James, former F-1 student from Bolivia, admitted that he did not want to leave because he had his “career in the U.S.,” something that was “nonexistent in Bolivia.” “You
cannot build something that big and that fast in Bolivia,” explained James. He did envision himself retiring in Bolivia, however. “I’d buy some land and chill,” imagined James. Upton, former F-1 student from Turkey, also did not plan on moving back to his home country. “I have immigration status, and I have a rewarding job here [in the United States],” he elaborated.

Olivia, former F-1 student from Kyrgyzstan, was adamantly about never going back to her home country:

*No way. I love America. I’m very patriotic. I worked hard to become a citizen. I love my life here.*

Similarly, Peter, former F-1 student from India, stated that he would never move back to India because “this [United States] [was] [his] home now.” “In fact, I’m moving my parents here, now that I can sponsor their green cards,” added Peter.

See Table 8 below for the summary of student participants’ feedback on whether they intended to go back to their home countries or not.

Table 8

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<th>Student Participants: Leaving or Staying?</th>
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<td>Immigration Status</td>
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Qualitative Data Analysis Summary

**Student participant sample.** I interviewed 38 international F-1 students (current and former) now residing in the United States, who had an experience of being employed while attending a school in the New England area in an F-1 status.
F-1 students’ motivations behind the decision to come to the United States. A combination of push, pull, and other miscellaneous external factors, all played a role in student participants’ decisions to come to the United States to some extent. The most common pull factors included U.S. ties, better economic opportunities, and pursuit of freedom related to one’s personal development aspirations. Push factors included political situation at home, parents’ ambitions, as well as friends’ influence. Random external influencing factors included direct outreach by a U.S. school’s admissions office, encounter with recruiters at an international education fair, and media influence.

F-1 students’ biggest challenges. The biggest challenges identified by student respondents were for the most part financial/ work-related ones (50%), followed by linguistic and cultural barriers (26.5%), lack of pathways towards U.S. permanent residency (10.5%), homesickness and loneliness (8%), and troubles with navigating the U.S. education system (5%).

Pre-departure expectations and reality. For 79% of student respondents, experience of being an international F-1 student in the United States did not meet their pre-departure expectations; 10.5% stated with utmost certainty that their experiences precisely matched the picture they had drawn for themselves prior to coming to the United States, whereas another 10.5% admitted that they had no expectations prior to their departure to begin with.

Earning while learning: experiences of F-1 students at work. All 38 student participants (100%) worked during their F-1 journeys, and therefore were able to share their employment-related experience with me. Eighty-two percent of student respondents worked in more than one capacity, whereas 18% identified having had just one work experience.
Over 50% of student respondents identified financial need as being their main driver for seeking employment in the United States. Other common job-search motivations included resume-building/ work experience, participation in the life of society, and immigration pathways. Half of the student respondents wanted to work from day one; another half had realized they wanted or else needed to work in the later stages of their F-1 journeys.

Student respondents worked in over 20 different industries, altogether having had held roughly 82 jobs with about 40 different job titles. Student participants took on either on-campus or off-campus jobs, or both, either consecutively or simultaneously.

Sixty-nine percent reported, either knowingly or otherwise unintentionally, to having had violated one of the conditions for lawful maintenance of their nonimmigrant F-1 status by either working without work authorization/ under-the-table (37%) or otherwise having had undertaken a CPT/OPT in the field that was entirely unrelated to their major (32%). Sixty-eight percent had positive experiences with their employers; 16% had mixed feelings; another 16% reported cases of mistreatment by their employers.

Ultimately, despite all of the hurdles that came along with international students’ job seeking strategies, nature and scope of jobs undertaken, places of employment, employer treatment, etc., the overall finding was that the student respondents predominately had no regrets about working while in an F-1 status.

Suggested trajectories for change included full elimination of unreasonably restrictive work-related immigration policies outlined by the U.S. government for F-1 students or else comprehensive reevaluation of those policies. Some other suggestions included allowing F-1 students to take out loans, lowering their tuition, increasing involvement of universities,
rebuilding academic programs, creating straightforward immigration pathways, and mirroring Canadian policies.

**Employment-related immigration policies: voices of F-1 students.** Ninety-two percent of student respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the current policies related to employment rights of international F-1 students in the United States, having assigned to them the following characteristics: violating human rights, fostering unauthorized employment, promoting inequality, limiting opportunities for socio-economic development, denying immigration pathways, yielding to other countries in the global race for talent, and causing unnecessary anxiety and stress.

**Immigration policies’ impact on F-1 students’ socio-economic well-being.** Seventy-six percent of the respondents were most certainly impacted by the restrictive employment regulations in a negative way. Some of the implications identified by student participants included: lower living standards, lack of confidence, fear, financial insecurity, frustration with inequality, feeling powerless, and being forced to act against moral their codes. Whereas 24% thought that policies had no effect on their socio-economic well-being.

Over 66% identified with having felt excluded in the U.S. society at least to some extent. Work restrictions, cultural differences, and having to carry a foreigner label were seen as major contributing factors to student participants’ feeling of exclusion. Twenty-nine percent felt fully included; 2.5% stated that they intentionally chose to exclude themselves, whereas another 2.5%, on the contrary, said that they forcefully included themselves into the U.S. society.

Meanings assigned to work by the student respondents were categorized into the following themes: social integration and meaningful contribution; development: personal and
professional; emotional fulfillment and happiness/ part of identity; financial security and independence, as well as economic mobility and success.

**International students’ coping strategies.** The study’s operationalized definition of coping referred to student participants’ problem solving mechanisms, specifically in relation to their ultimate goals and ways in which they chose to achieve them.

Data showed that 60.5% chose not to conform with the legal regulations outlined for them by the U.S. government, having sought innovative pathways towards achieving their objectives in the result. Whereas 37% chose to strictly follow the rules by either merely accepting the policies as something they had no control over, or otherwise by lowering their standards with regard to the meaning they had assigned to the concept of success.

**Students’ reflections on their F-1 journeys: what now?** Eighty-nine percent of student respondents said that they would have never had to experience the challenges they had encountered during their F-1 journeys had they stayed in their home countries. Had they never come to the United States, student participants noted that they would not have had to deal with work restrictions or language and culture barriers, that their problems would be different, or that they would be different people altogether.

When asked about whether they wanted to stay in the United States or move back to their home countries or elsewhere, 61% of the student respondents stated that they did not want to leave the United States. Whereas, 21% said that they were not sure, and 18% were planning to leave.
CHAPTER 6

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS ON F-1 STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES

In addition to 38 student participants, I managed to bring 22 stakeholders on board to participate in the study. Selected through snowball-, informant- and network sampling, those stakeholders identified as someone who was directly involved with and exposed to international students’ experiences in a tight-knit capacity, such as international student advisors, teachers, and employers.

Initially, I asked all 22 stakeholder participants the same demographic-data-related questions. There were nine questions of this nature, and all 22 individuals responded to them; quantitative data analysis is presented in the first section of this chapter. Qualitative data related to stakeholder participants follows the descriptive statistics part. Qualitative data was obtained through a combination of both in-person interviews as well as conversations that took place during informal group settings, such as professional conferences and other networking events. In cases where I did not get a chance to schedule and conduct one-on-one interviews with the stakeholders, I asked them to fill out a comprehensive online questionnaire of qualitative nature with open-ended questions on the topics that we had discussed. This was done to ensure data accuracy, as I did not have the capacity to take notes when I spoke with stakeholders in informal settings while networking. Scheduled one-on-one interviews with stakeholder participants ranged from two to three hours in length. Conversations that took place during a variety of networking events lasted anywhere from 15 minutes to two and a half hours. The time it took those stakeholders to complete the open-
ended questionnaire, could not be determined, since some of the responses were very detailed and comprehensive, while other were brief and straight-to-the-point.

None of the stakeholder respondents’ names hereby utilized are real for the purpose of preserving their privacy. Names of the institutions represented by the participants were disguised for the same reason. Job/ affiliation titles are real. Empirical findings hereby shed light on eight main themes uncovered during the qualitative data collection process: Working with International Students: Reasons and Attitudes; Why International Students Want to Study in the United States; Biggest Challenges of Working and Interacting with F-1 Students; Views on Current F-1 Employment-Related Immigration Policies; International Students’ Experiences in a Workplace; Impact of Employment-Related Immigration Policies on F-1 International Students’ Socio-Economic Well-Being; To Stay or Not to Stay: That is the Question, and finally, International Students at Public Universities.

Multiple sub-themes were identified throughout the findings’ analysis of each topic, which were summarized in both narrative and visual formats, such as charts and tables. A concise overview of the findings, presented in the Qualitative Data Analysis Summary, was developed to provide a complete and comprehensive picture of the stakeholders’ views on the quality of international students’ livelihoods, the main inquiry of my research work.

**Demographic Data and Descriptive Statistics**

Presented below is the quantitative data analysis put together on the basis of the stakeholder participants’ demographic variables along with the elements of descriptive statistics. The section is hereby organized in the following order: country of birth; immigrant generation; age; gender; ethnicity/ ancestry; relation to F-1 students; DSO/ PDSO experience; main focus of involvement, and institution/ organization type.
Country of birth. Twenty-two stakeholder participants originated from ten different countries, representing five geographic regions: North America (68%), Europe (14%), Africa (9%), Asia (4.5%), and Oceania (4.5%).

See Table E.23 in Appendix E for a comprehensive summary that includes a comparison of stakeholder respondents’ specific countries of birth with the represented world’s geographic regions, with numbers and percentages.

Immigrant generation. Out of the 22 stakeholder participants, 36% were first-generation immigrants, meaning that they were born outside of the United States and were now either U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Nine percent of the respondents were first-generation Americans, meaning that they were born in the United States, but at least one of their parents originated from a different country. Fifty percent of the respondents were higher generation Americans, meaning that their upbringing did not involve foreign-born parents. Finally, 5% were born outside of the United States and did not have a permanent resident or U.S. citizen status.

Age. The average age of 22 stakeholder participants/ mean value was 38. The median value appeared to be 37. The unimodal age value/ the age repeated most could not be identified as there was no single age that was represented the most, however ages 31, 37, 45, 46, and 50 were represented by at least two participants, therefore producing a multimodal distribution. Age data range was calculated to be 29.

Thirteen percent of the total stakeholder participant sample were in their 20’s; 46% – in their 30’s; 27% – in their 40’s, and 13.5% – in their 50’s.

Gender. Out of the total of 22 stakeholder participants, 64% were women, and 36% were men. Sixty-four percent of female stakeholders originated from seven different
countries out of the total of ten countries represented by the entire sample. See Table E.24 in Appendix E for the summary of the various countries of birth of women-participants according to the world’s geographic regions. Male stakeholders (36% of the total stakeholder sample) originated from four different countries. See Table E.25 in Appendix E for a more comprehensive summary with a comparison of the male stakeholder participants’ specific countries of birth according to the world’s geographic regions, including numbers and percentages.

Overall, there was a bigger representation of female stakeholder participants from North America, Europe, and Asia. However, there was a bigger representation of male-participants from Africa.

**Ethnicity/Ancestry.** An inquiry about one’s ethnicity often requires an open-ended feedback. Therefore, I encouraged my stakeholder participants to be as elaborate as they deemed adequate. All respondents had different answers. Some would add the color of their skin in the mix, some would refer to their country of origin, whereas others provided more elaborate responses.

After having analyzed the stakeholder participants’ self-interpretation about their ethnicity, I was able to group them into four compressed categories that could ultimately broadly represent their ethnic ancestry: European (68%), Latin (13.75%), Mixed (13.5%), and African (4.5%). See Table E.26 in Appendix E for a comprehensive summary with a comparison of the ancestry groups adopted by the researcher (self) to the actual responses communicated by the stakeholder respondents.

**Relation to F-1 students.** Most stakeholder participants (73% of the total sample) worked at a higher education institution (HEI). Out of those 73%, most stakeholders
identified their relation to international F-1 students as being their advisor, while two – worked with international students in a capacity that did not fall under the “International Student Advisor” umbrella: one respondent worked with undergraduate international students as a Therapist/Mental Health Counselor as well as a Professor teaching classes to graduate international students, and one respondent was an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher.

**Non-HEI.** The next group of stakeholder respondents (18%) did not work at a college or university: one respondent worked as a College Counselor and Academic Advisor for Chinese Students at a boarding high school, and one stakeholder respondent served as a Director of Human Resources at a private ESL School. Additionally, two participants provided external, unrelated to academia services to international F-1 students by selling their product to newly arrived international students, mainly during their partner-schools’ orientation events.

**Peer.** Finally, two fellow students (9% of the total sample) were added to the mix of the stakeholder respondent sample. The first one was a U.S.-born student who was enrolled in a graduate program dominated by international F-1 students, while the second graduate student, despite identifying as an international student, had never been in an F-1 status because they had moved to the United States with a U.S. permanent resident status.

See Table E.27 in Appendix E for a comparison of the stakeholder participants’ entity, subdivided into three categories: HEI, Non-HEI, and Peer; general relation category, and their work (or in case with fellow students – affiliation) title.

**DSO/ PDSO experience.** A Designated School Official (DSO) or a Principal Designated School Official (PDSO) variable was important for me to include in my research
because it could be used as an identifier of one’s deeper-than-average comprehension of immigration policies related to F-1 students. Appointed by the DHS, DSO’s and PDSO’s essentially become the ultimate gatekeepers of international students’ compliance with their nonimmigrant status, therefore playing an important role during students’ F-1 journeys.

Out of the total sample of 22 stakeholder participants, 59% stated that they were either currently serving, or otherwise had served international F-1 students in the past, in either a DSO or a PDSO capacity. That meant that at least at some point in their careers, those individuals had access to the U.S. government database SEVIS, a shared platform designed to track and report all activities associated with international F-1 students’ nonimmigrant status. Forty-one percent of the stakeholder sample had never held a DSO/PDSO position.

See Table E.28 in Appendix E for a visual of stakeholder participants who had an experience of collaboration with the U.S. government on monitoring international F-1 students’ nonimmigrant status activities and who did not.

Main focus of involvement. The variable on the main focus of involvement, in other words, stakeholder participants’ main duties performed in relation to international F-1 students, was included in the analysis to better understand stakeholder participants’ specific nature of engagement with F-1 students. Some respondents were able to identify one main focus within their roles, whereas most had two or more foci. For example, 18% stated that their single main responsibility in relation to international F-1 students was academic advising, for 14% it was solely immigration advising, and so on. Whereas out of 14% who were teaching, only 4% were exclusively teaching, while 10% were teaching in addition to one more duty. The list goes on.
Overall, the results of the “Main Focus of Involvement” variable analysis revealed that the most common duty performed by stakeholder participant sample in relation to international F-1 students, was immigration advising (41%), followed by programming (27%), and academic advising (23%). See Table E.29 in Appendix E for a closer look on how the main focus/ nature of stakeholder participants’ involvement aligned with their relation to F-1 students.

**Institution/ organization type.** Forty-six percent of stakeholder participants were affiliated with a public HEI; 36% worked at a private HEI; 4.5% worked at a private ESL school, and 9% worked for a private business that served international students.

See Table E.30 in Appendix E for a comprehensive visual summary of the respondents’ affiliation that specifies their institution’s type and geographic region.

**Quantitative data analysis summary.** I interviewed 22 stakeholders who had identified as being directly involved with and exposed to international students’ experiences in close-knit capacity. Twenty-two stakeholder participants originated from ten different countries, representing five geographic regions. Fifty-nine percent were U.S.-born; 36% of the respondents were first-generation immigrants in the United States; 9% identified as first-generation Americans; 50% were higher-generation Americans, and 5% were currently in a nonimmigrant status. The average age of the respondents was 38, ranging from 23 to 52 years of age, with the biggest representation of stakeholder participants (46%) being in their 30’s. Sixty-four percent of the sample were female, and 36% were male. Sixty-eight percent of the participants were of European descent, 13.75% were of Latin decent, 13.75% were of mixed ethnic heritage, and 4.5% – of African.
The average relation of the respondents to F-1 students was “International Student Advisor” (64%). Fifty-nine percent of the respondents had DSO/ PDSO experience, whereas 41% did not. Most common nature of the respondents’ involvement in relation to international F-1 students was immigration advising (41%), followed by programming (27%) and academic advising (23%). Forty-six percent of stakeholder participants were affiliated with a public HEI, 36% – with a private HEI, and 18% with Other entity.

See Table E 4.31 in Appendix E for a comprehensive demographic summary of the stakeholder participant sample with pseudonyms sorted in alphabetical order and aligned with their demographic data in the following order: country of origin, immigrant generation, age, gender, ethnicity, relation to F-1 students, DSO/ PDSO experience, main focus of involvement/ responsibilities carried out in relation to international students, and institution/ organization affiliation type. Table E 4.31 is also followed by a descriptive list with the same data to assist the reader with abbreviations utilized within the table, and as an alternative presentation style of the summary.

**Working with International Students: Reasons and Attitudes**

A central interview question posed to stakeholders focused on why or how the study participants ended up working with international students. For 73% of the respondents, the decision to serve international F-1 students was intentional, whereas other stakeholder participants admitted to having had fallen into their current roles unintentionally.

**Intentional.** Most stakeholder respondents (73%) stated that it had been a willful or even an aforethought decision to pursue their professional involvement with this student population, having had been inspired by either their preliminary career aspirations or having had been shaped by their past experiences, such as study abroad.
Preliminary career goal. For some, it had been a career goal since college days. “It was a professional interest of mine … I studied global communication in my undergrad,” admitted Abby, a 28-year-old International Student Pathway Program Advisor, who currently worked at a private research university in New England. Abby elaborated:

*I have always been interested in culture, and my interests grew and became more directed once I got into the field of higher ed and I was able to pair my love for travel and culture with my love for the higher education industry.*

Similarly, Adel, a 52-year-old International Student Advisor, who currently worked at a public research university located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, had “studied Counseling/Student Affairs purposefully to work with international students.” Adel mentioned that she “love[d] traveling and had many international friends in college,” so it was “natural for [her] to get involved in this field to promote international education.”

Shaped by past experiences. For some stakeholder participants, the decision to work closely with international students was shaped by their past experiences. Several respondents admitted to having had been exposed to international students through participation in extracurricular activities during their college years. Some stakeholder participants had studied abroad in the past, and some were former international students in the United States.

Exposure to international students during college years. Three stakeholder respondents admitted that their decision to work with international students had been shaped by relationships they had created with international students during their undergraduate journeys. For example, Lenny, a 46-year-old International Student Advisor, who currently worked at a community college located in New England, admitted that having been involved in extracurricular activities with international students during his college years, played an important role in his career choice. Initially, Lenny started working with international
students in a “peer academic advisor” capacity “when [he] was an undergraduate student.” and then he “became a resident advisor for an international dorm.”

In a like manner, Libby, a 23-year-old International Student Programming Specialist, who now worked at a public research university in the Midwest’s East North Central region, also “started working with international students during [her] undergraduate years.” Libby shared that since she “hosted international students” when she was in college, she eventually “found a way to get involved in [her] school's International Student Services office.” And Kevin, 30-year-old Co-Founder of a For-Profit Business based in New England that primarily served international students in the United States, mentioned that when he was in college, he “saw that international students had a very difficult time getting settled in the United States,” and as a result of that exposure, decided to “develop a business that could make the process easier” for that student population.

*Former study-abroad students.* The decision leading to getting involved with the field of international education had also been framed as a result of some stakeholders’ study-abroad experience. For example, Sandra, a 45-year-old International Student Advisor at a community college located in New England, stated that it was her “study abroad experience” that “affirmed” her desire to “work with international students.” And Dee, a 44-year-old International Student Advisor who currently worked at a private special-focus university in New England, where students majored in subjects related to technological design and engineering, also identified her experience of studying abroad as having had become the ultimate factor in choosing her current occupation. “I’ve always been interested in languages and cultures,” admitted Dee. She said that her “parents travelled a lot, so [she] got it from them.” Dee elaborated:
I studied abroad in Costa Rica for several months, yet it was more of an internship-type experience ... Spanish was my major in college, so this is why I chose to go to Costa Rica.

Dee also shared that in addition, she “lived in Mexico for a year and a half” and then in “Japan for five years,” teaching ESL. “That’s how I got into the international education field,” explained Dee.

Former international students. Some stakeholder respondents admitted that the main reason behind their career choice was the fact that they themselves were once international students and now wanted to help those who were in a similar situation they had once been in. For example, Sophia (33 y/o), a former international student from Ukraine who now worked as a Director of Human Resources (HR) at a private ESL school based in New England, and who had worked as an International Student Advisor for over seven years prior to her current role, said that she “learned a lot of lessons from [her] own experiences.” Therefore, Sophia “wanted to share” those experiences with other international students. “I didn’t want students to make the same mistakes that I made,” she clarified. Ultimately, Sophia “felt like [she] could relate to international students” and “help them with [her] advice.”

In the same vein, Fiona (37 y/o), a former international student from Bulgaria and an International Student and Scholar Advisor, who now worked at a public research university located in the South Atlantic region, said that she was also “interested in the field mostly because of [her] personal experience as a former international student.” Similarly, Vivien (50 y/o), an International Student and Scholar Advisor at a public research university in New England and a former international student from Uzbekistan, also stated that she wanted to “help other foreign students, like [her]self.”
Yomar (45 y/o), the Dean of International Student Affairs at a private liberal arts college in the Midwest-East North Central region and a former international student from Côte d'Ivoire, shared with me that when he was an international student himself, he had “served on the student government board and advocated for international student issues.” Needless to say, for him, it was “only natural to continue his advocacy” by entering the field of international education in a professional capacity.

**Circumstantial.** For some stakeholder participants, it was a circumstantial-yet-easy switch from the sister industries of study abroad and ESL teaching. For example, Eva, a 35-year-old International Student Services Specialist, who was currently working for a private research university located in the South Atlantic region of the United States, admitted that initially, she “began working in education abroad” after having had “pursued [her] master’s in international education.” However, “a change of job responsibilities” had led Eva to “international student services.” Eva added that “since returning to the United States, [she] … found that [she] related well with international students.”

For Bob (31 y/o), an International Student Admissions Counselor and Advisor at a private HEI with a music-focus located in New England, it was an easy switch from having had initially done “teaching English abroad” to then “serving international students” upon his return. In a similar fashion, Jason (42 y/o), who currently worked as a College Counselor and Academic Advisor for Chinese Students at a boarding high school located in the Midwest-East North Central region, also admitted to having had slightly switched fields. “I taught overseas as well as in the States,” said Jason, so working with international students was not at all foreign to him.
Unintentional. Not all stakeholder participants got involved with international F-1 students intentionally or voluntarily, however. Some respondents admitted that they had sort of fallen into the roles they now held. For example, Jazz (32 y/o), who currently worked as an International Student Advisor at a public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, said that the reason she had started working with international students was because “it was added to [her] job.” Similarly, Caleb (29 y/o), a Sales Manager at a For-Profit Organization located in New England and primarily serving international students all over the United States, stated that he started working with international students when he got his current job and then found out that “international students were [the company’s] main customers.”

Ronda, a 31-year-old International Student Advisor currently working at a private research university located in New England, but who had worked at a community college in the same region prior to her current institution, said that “the college [she] work[ed] at ha[d] seen a significant increase in international student enrollment” and she had to assume new responsibilities. Having gained international student advising experience at a community college, Ronda then realized that this was something she could do at a different institution. In Lola’s case, international students were assigned to her caseload, something that she herself did not specifically seek. Lola, a 39-year-old Academic Advisor to International Students at a public research university in the Midwest-East North Central region, elaborated:

In my role as academic advisor, tasks were divided and, I assume, this one [Academic Advisor to International Students] was given to me because of my bilingual skills and me being the only minority in the group of advisors.
Jusamby, a 50-year old Therapist and Professor at a private all-women’s college in New England and a first-generation immigrant from New Zealand, also did not intentionally choose to be working with international students. She elaborated:

*International students [are among] those students who use our [counseling] services, and I think as an immigrant myself, they often request to work with me, as they feel we share some similar experiences.*

And Rogelio (34 y/o), a U.S.-born graduate student at public research university in New England, did not expect to find himself in a classroom full of international students:

*Most of the students in our program are international ... we were in study groups together, mostly with international students from India and China ... There are some smart international students out there, but their English was not up to speed, and their writing was poor to mediocre at best. Very good ideas though. Especially the Chinese students. So, I ended up editing all the papers. So was the case with other American students who, like me, felt like we had to work harder. Why are we in the same class and have to fix their mistakes? It’s frustrating. University needs to raise their admission standards, or they should have to make them take English classes so they can do college level writing. I mean, I’ve seen better writing in high school.*

Ultimately, although there are many ways in which one can get involved in the type of work where international students are their primary population of service/interaction, most of the stakeholder respondents (73%) in my sample assumed their current roles willfully, as a result of either their forgoing pursuit of a career in international education or as a consequence of their past experiences where they had been exposed to international travel or other environments that had laid a foundation for their current roles. In contrast, 23% of the sample had fallen into the roles they currently held unintentionally.

**Influence of stakeholders’ identities on their attitudes towards F-1 students.**

Many stakeholder respondents stated that their backgrounds had led them to choosing a career in international education. However, empirical data obtained from the study participants showed that their background had also played a significant role in ways they
approached their work with international students: with some being more understanding of
the international students’ issues due to their experiences, and others having admitted to
needing more work on being able to serve their student better.

First-generation immigrants. For example, being a first-generation immigrant stood
out as a significant marker of interest in serving the field of international education. Yomar
(45 y/o), the Dean of International Student Affairs at a private liberal arts college in the
Midwest-East North Central region and a first-generation immigrant from Cote d’Ivoire,
stated that “to a large extent [he] had experienced a lot of [what his] students were going
through.” Yomar said that because he was also a foreigner, he was able to “understand some
context of the home culture and its impact on their [international students’] experience in the
United States.” In a similar fashion, Sandra (45 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a
community college in New England and a first-generation immigrant from Guatemala, noted
that she “[felt] that [her] background, identity and personal experience helped [her] to feel
related to the experiences and situations internationals [went] through during their … studies
in the U.S.”

Lenny (46 y/o), an International Student Advisor at another community college in
New England, who was also a first-generation immigrant, having originated from Mexico,
echoed Sandra’s argument by sharing that “being bi-cultural and living in the U.S.,” he
believed that “[his] genetic make-up and appearance allowed [him] to connect with students”
better. Lenny “used [his] life experiences and cross-cultural interactions as a platform for
working with international students.” A similar message came from Jusamby (50 y/o), a first-
generation immigrant from New Zealand who now worked as a Mental Health Counselor and
Professor at an all-women’s university in New England:
I think my own experiences as an immigrant helped me understand the diversity and difficulties of immigrants from a variety of backgrounds.

In addition, Jusamby said that what also helped her in her current work with international students, was the “practical knowledge of the systemic difficulties of the immigration process.”

**Former international students.** Another characteristic, being a former international student in the United States, also provided for a more empathetic attitude towards international students’ issues as a result of the participants’ lived experiences. “I feel more compassionate and understanding to what international students are going through because of my personal experience as a former international student,” said Fiona (37 y/o), an International Student and Scholar Advisor at a public research university based in the South Atlantic region of the United States and a former international F-1 student from Bulgaria. Similarly, having gone through a lot of hurdles during her F-1 journey, Sophia (33 y/o), a former international student from Ukraine who was currently working as a director of HR at a private ESL school located in New England, where she had also previously served as an international student advisor and a DSO, said that “[she] was an international student [her]self, plus [she] had a degree in higher education, and … wanted to do something to help people.”

**Former study-abroad students.** Some of the stakeholders had also experienced what it was like to be an international student, however not in the United States, but in a different country. This element of their identity, being a foreign student in a different country, had led to the formation of a more positive outlook towards international students, making them feel more cognizant of their struggles. For example, Jambo, a 46-year-old fellow graduate student at a public research university in New England, who was an immigrant from Sierra Leone
and who had never held an F-1 status, was once a foreign graduate student in Germany and admitted to having had faced potentially similar struggles that international students in the United States were going through:

*I had many challenges when I was an international student in Germany, having to learn how to navigate a new education system ... language was difficult, so I sympathize with ... international students here [in the United States]; I know what they are going through. Plus, I found the U.S. system of education to be even more complex and robust than in Germany, so ... I'm sure ... that's ... [a] challenge ... for [international] students here.*

Stakeholder participants who had an experience of studying abroad mentioned that such an experience was a significant factor that had influenced their current perceptions of international students’ issues. For example, Libby (23 y/o), an International Student Programming Specialist at a public research university in the Midwest-East North Central region, stated that her experience of studying abroad “made [her] able to relate with the struggles international students face[d].” Dee (44 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a technology-focused private university based in New England, emphasized how important her study abroad experience was in relation to her current role of helping international students navigate through their uneasy journeys. Dee elaborated:

*Having been through the struggles, I understand how difficult it is, and I'm grateful for people who helped me, and I wanna pay back now.*

Similarly, Adel (52 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, said that “[she] ha[d] traveled and lived abroad, and those experiences ha[d] given [her] firsthand understanding and passion for international education.”

**First-generation Americans.** Another characteristic, being a first-generation American and having immigrant parents, also seemed to have had influenced stakeholder
participants’ attitudes towards international students in a positive way, making them feel more compassionate.

*I think I was a little bit more sympathetic and understanding compared to other students ... See, other American students ... avoided being in groups with international students ... I never did that. My family comes from a different country and knowing how many challenges they went through coming to this country, reminded me to be kinder and more accepting.*

(Rogelio, 34 y/o, Fellow U.S.-Born Graduate Student, Public Research University in New England)

In addition to being more compassionate, being a first-generation American and having had an opportunity to study abroad in the past, Lola (39 y/o), an Academic Advisor to International Students working at a public research university in the Midwest-East North Central region, mentioned that she felt like she was not only more supportive of international students as a result of her identity, but was also continuously trying to encourage her American students to “pursue … opportunities in other countries” in an attempt to educate a wider community about the world and how much it had to offer.

*Higher-generation Americans.* Those stakeholders who identified as being higher-generation Americans, meaning that they did not come from a family of foreign parents, felt like they had a bit of a different, albeit meaningful role to play in their interactions with international students. Some took on a role of a cultural mentor, whereas others, specifically white American stakeholders, admitted to having had realized how important it was to be cognizant of their white privilege.

*Cultural mentors.* For example, Jason (42 y/o), a College Counselor and Academic Advisor to Chinese Students at a boarding high school located in the Midwest-East North Central region of the United States, said that he thought of himself as a cultural mentor. Jason elaborated:

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Being that my students are studying in the U.S., at U.S. institutions, I often find myself in the role of cultural mentor, explaining cultural nuances both in the classroom and outside and relating that to specific situations.

Adel (52 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, saw herself as an ambassador for her home country of the United States. Adel explained:

I identify as an American and believe that the U.S. has a lot to offer the world in terms of education, culture, government, and attitude. I see myself as a domestic ambassador for the U.S. I want international students to have a good experience in the U.S. and with Americans, and I want to see them take that experience, knowledge, and attitude home with them, and spread it around.

As someone who was a higher-generation American yet who spent most of his life interacting with, serving, hiring, and working along international students, Kevin (30 y/o), the Co-Founder of a For-Profit Business based in New England and predominantly serving F-1 students all over the Unites States, admitted that “[he] had a much deeper respect for how hard it [was] to be an international student. Emotionally and legally.”

Recognizing white privilege. Another theme that came up from conversations with higher-generation Americans, specifically white American stakeholders, was that of recognizing their white privilege and being aware of how their identities might influence the ways in which they perceived and interacted with international students. For example, Abby (28 y/o), an International Student Pathway Program Advisor at a private research university in New England, emphasized that it was important for her to pay a particular attention on how her identity of a white American woman influenced her interactions with the population she served. Abby elaborated:

I had to learn to check my white privilege at the door. I have learned to never assume their [international students’] religion, country of origin, country of citizenship, or their upbringings. Being white with European decent, I learned how many "assumptions" I could make about international students, but by getting to know my
students I have quickly learned that a lot of pre-conceived notions someone from my background could make, are often false and could be taken offensively.

Another white higher-generation American, Libby (23 y/o), International Student Programming Specialist at a public research university located in the Midwest-East North Central region, echoed Abby’s statement:

*As a white woman, I try to use my privilege as a native English speaker from this country to help students when they are struggling with any issues on campus and find ways to be a helpful ally.*

Continuously working on her ability to serve international student in a more meaningful way and trying to learn the ways in which she could understand the elements of her already constructed identity of a white higher-generation American better, Ronda (31 y/o), an International Student Advisor working at a private research university in New England, shared the following:

*I work to educate myself on how I can continuously improve my advising and teaching practices in order to provide the best support possible, both through academic research and informal reading and conversations with other professionals. I am conscious of not having the experience of living in a country other than the one I grew up in and strive to understand students’ individual experiences with doing so.*

Ultimately, stakeholders’ identities and personal backgrounds played a big role in how they described their attitudes towards international students. From the data collected, it was evident that those individuals who were either first-generation immigrants or had studied abroad in the past, were able to build on their personal experiences and identify as being more compassionate and understanding of international students as a result of those experiences. Those individuals witnessed the existence of different worlds that were just as coherent as the United States, therefore having gained an outsider’s perspective. Whereas, higher-generation, mostly white, American stakeholder respondents put a bigger emphasis on their ability to be international students’ cultural mentors and ambassadors for the United
States, while having to be continuously aware of how their white privilege might play out in situations that require a high degree of cultural competency. See Table E.32 in Appendix E for the visual summary of stakeholder participants’ identity aspects in juxtaposition to their attitudes towards international F-1 students.

Why International Students Want to Study in the United States

Another question posed to stakeholder participants focused on why they thought internationally-bound students chose to study in the United States in the first place. The most common stakeholder participants’ responses to the question about international students’ driving factors included better opportunities, quality and prestige of the U.S. higher education, as well as a gateway into the country. Additional reasons identified by the respondents were: American dream, family expectation, way to escape, globalization, marketing force of U.S. colleges, seeking challenge, experiencing U.S. culture, and learning English.

Opportunity. The theme of opportunity was presented by stakeholder respondents from different angles. Some spoke about opportunities in a general sense, seeing it as a gateway to a better life or greater access to conduct research, while others were more specific, indicating that the pursuit of better job opportunities was international students’ primary motivation for coming to the United States.

General. Ximena a 37-year-old ESL Instructor who worked at a private liberal college in New England, said that her international students “noted that [studying in the United States] provided more opportunity for them and their families.” Jason (42 y/o), a College Counselor/Advisor to Chinese Students who worked at a boarding high school located in the Midwest-East North Central region, thought that the reason why international
students chose to come to the United States was because they were “looking for new opportunities.” Lenny (46 y/o), an International Student Advisor working at a community college in New England, stated that some of his students had shared with him that they saw study in the United States as “a gateway to a better life.”

Eva (35 y/o), an International Student Services Specialist who worked at a private research university in the South Atlantic region, stated that the reason why international students chose the United States as their study destination was because there were more “scholarships and research opportunities … then in their home countries.” Eva also mentioned that the United States provided an opportunity for international students “to play sports at the tertiary level that may not be the case in their home country.”

Employment. Most stakeholder respondents referred to the theme of opportunity in relation to international students’ ability to get a job, either in the United States or in their home countries.

Job opportunities in the United States. “International students want to study in the U.S. because this opens more opportunities for employment in the U.S.,” said Sandra (45 y/o), an International Student Advisor working at a community college in New England. Similarly, Yomar (45 y/o), the Dean of International Student Affairs at a liberal arts college located in the Midwest-North East Central region, stated that “U.S. degrees provide[d] … the possibility of work in the U.S.” Similarly, Adel (52 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a private research university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, affirmed that international students “d[id] it [decide to study in the United States] as a pathway to employment in the U.S.”
Some stakeholder participants mentioned that the United States simply had “more job opportunities available” (Ronda, 31 y/o, International Student Advisor, private research university, New England) and that there were “better opportunities for internships and employment than [international students’] home countries” (Abby, 28 y/o, International Student Pathway Program Advisor, private research university, New England). In addition, some respondents admitted that the United States provided international students “the chance to work for top companies” (Caleb, 29 y/o, Sales Manager at a For-Profit Business servicing international students, New England) as well as a “higher salary … plus, certain sectors are arguably the best in the world in the U.S., think Silicon Valley” (Libby, 23 y/o, International Student Programming Specialist, public research university, Midwest-East North Central).

**Job opportunities back home.** Among those stakeholders who saw opportunity as being related to employment, some also mentioned international students’ ability to get a job in their home country upon completion of their studies in the United States. For example, Abby (28 y/o), an International Student Pathway Program Advisor at a private research university in New England, thought that international students pursued education in the United States because it would “set [them] apart when they return[ed] to their home country to seek employment.” Similarly, Adel (52 y/o), an International Student Advisor who worked at a public research university located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, also believed that a U.S. degree made students “more marketable” back home.

International students pursued U.S. education to gain “better professional opportunities back home,” according to Jason (42 y/o), a College Counselor/Advisor to Chinese Students who worked at a boarding high school located in the Midwest-East North Central region. And according to Sandra (45 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a
community college in New England, international students wanted “to study in the U.S. because this open[ed] more opportunities for employment in their home country” in addition to potential job opportunities within the United States. Sandra believed that foreign employers “really value[d] the U.S. experience.”

**U.S. education.** Many stakeholder participants affirmed that the prestige of U.S. education was another strong factor that was driving young adults around the world to come to the United States in pursuit of their academic degrees. Indeed, U.S. education is “highly valued around the world” (Adel, 52 y/o, International Student Advisor, public research university, Northeast-Mid-Atlantic), and U.S. colleges “have a strong marketing force” (Jusamby, 50 y/o, Therapist/ Professor, private all-women’s university, New England).

According to the study participants, United States had great schools and better education in general. “I believe they [international students] want to study in the U.S. for access to great schools,” noted Caleb (29 y/o), a Sales Manager at a For-Profit Business based in New England and servicing international students in all parts of the United States. In a like manner, Abby (28 y/o), an International Student Pathway Program Advisor at a private research university in New England, stated that “the U.S. education [was] better compared to [international students’] home countries.” And Bob (31 y/o), an International Student Admissions Counselor at a private music-focused institution of higher education located in New England, attested to that: “such educational opportunities are simply not available in their [international students’] home country” (Bob). Rogelio (34 y/o), a fellow U.S.-born graduate student who took classes with many international students at a public research university in New England, elaborated on that notion:

*U.S. universities are very prestigious, so [international students] are trying to do whatever they can and power through it to then go home and get ahead.*
Eva (35 y/o), an International Student Services Specialist working at a private research university in the South Atlantic region of the United States, stated that many of her international students “viewed it [U.S. education] as a way to be successful and rewarding” in the eyes of their “family and friends back home.” Eva also added that “the U.S. had some of the top ranked universities in the world” and that was why international students wanted that experience. Ronda (31 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a private research university in New England, put an emphasis on the style of American education, determining it to be the main reason why international students decided to study in the United States. Ronda explained her point of view by sharing with me what her students themselves thought about it:

*The students I’ve talked to about this have felt they could experience a more rigorous education in the U.S. than they could at home because they could get more exposure to experts in their field.*

In addition to rigor and exposure to the best field experts, such characteristics as “flexibility in choosing a course of study” (Libby, 23 y/o, International Student Programming Specialist, public research university, Midwest-East North Central) and opportunity of “pursuing Liberal Arts pathways” (Eva, 35 y/o, International Student Services Specialist, private research university, South Atlantic) were mentioned.

**Expectation.** Several stakeholder respondents mentioned that it was not always up to a student to make a decision to study in the United States, however. International students would “sometimes [come here] because it had been expected of them” (Jusamby, 50 y/o, Therapist/Professor, private all-women’s university, New England). Lenny (46 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a public community college in New England, mentioned that
studying in the United States was something that international students’ “family d[id] and [would] be something that they need[ed] to do as well.”

Other stakeholders also noted that due to the globalization of higher education, in some cases it was simply viewed as a “logical step” (Jason, 42 y/o, College Counselor/Academic Advisor to Chinese Students, boarding high school, Midwest-East North Central) that needed to be taken to eventually be able to compete in the global economy, especially if students were “seeking a global career” (Jambo, 46 y/o, Fellow International Student/ U.S. Permanent Resident who had never held an F-1 status, public research university, New England).

**Escape.** In contrast, a couple of stakeholder respondents emphasized that for some students, coming to the United States was either a way to “escape a family situation” (Jusamby, 50 y/o, Therapist/ Professor, private all-women’s university, New England) or a way to “escape conflict in their home country while pursuing a degree (Abby, 28 y/o, International Student Pathway Program Advisor, private research university, New England).

**American dream/immigration pathway.** Another major theme that emerged from my conversations with the stakeholder participants about international students’ driving factors for choosing the United States as their study destination, was a pursuit of the American Dream and a chance of immigration. “I believe that the United States is still a great land of opportunity,” said Kevin (30 y/o), the Co-Founder of a For-Profit Business based in New England and serving international students in all parts of the United States. “Some [international students] believe in the American Dream” (Eva, 35 y/o, International Student Services Specialist, private research university, South Atlantic) and want “to see th[at]
American ‘dream’ for themselves” (Vivien, 50 y/o, International Student and Scholar Advisor, public research university, New England).

Other reasons for international students’ decision to study in the United States identified by some stakeholders included: “social mobility” (Bob, 31 y/o, International Student Admissions Counselor, private music-focused HEI, New England); “possibility of immigration to the U.S. in some cases” (Fiona, 37 y/o, International Student and Scholar Advisor, public research university, South Atlantic); “a way to get into the United States” (Rogelio, 34 y/o, Fellow U.S.-born Graduate Student, public research university, New England), and a way of “potentially stay[ing] in the U.S.” (Lola, 39 y/o, Academic Advisor to International Students, public research university, Midwest-East North Central).

Miscellaneous. Some other reasons for choosing to study in the United States mentioned by the study participants, were international students’ desire to learn English, obtain personal viewpoints about the United States, experience a free culture, and to pursue new challenges.

Biggest Challenges of Working and Interacting with F-1 Students

The most common challenges in working and interacting with international students identified by stakeholder participants involved: current political situation in the United States aligned with its restrictive immigration policies for F-1 students, employment-related issues, as well as ethical dilemmas. Other challenges identified by the respondents included inequalities in opportunities, the feeling of entitlement, institutional policies, financial difficulties, language barriers, cultural differences, academic integrity, and lack of professional knowledge to be able to serve international students in a more efficient way.
**U.S. political climate and immigration policies.** Many interviewees admitted that it was rather challenging for them to serve international students in a way that they wished they could due to the current political climate in the country and its ever changing immigration policies affecting students. “There are situations when I cannot assist or help the students because it is beyond my control,” said Sandra (45 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a public community college in New England. “Changes in the current U.S. administration” (Eva, 35 y/o, International Student Services Specialist, private research university, South Atlantic) as well as “continuously changing immigration regulations” (Dee, 44 y/o, International Student Advisor, private technology-focused university, New England) often created “unintended consequences … from the actions taken by students” (Dee) for international student advisors trying to serve their F-1 students in the best possible way.

Lenny (46 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a public community college in New England, admitted that it was not an easy task for him to explain to his students all of the intricacies that immigration policies were comprised of. Lenny elaborated:

*I believe that the most difficult part of my job is guiding them [international students] through the process so they understand all the ... regulations, so that they can achieve their academic and career goals.*

Similarly, Caleb (29 y/o), a Sales Manager at a For-Profit Business based in New England and serving international students all over the United States, also shared his frustration with how current policies were not considering some of the international students’ aspirations to stay in the country after graduation. “The most difficult part is that they [international students] may not be able to stay in the U.S. after they are finished with school,” admitted Caleb, who felt helpless during multiple conversations he had with his international student-customers.
Employment-related struggles. From the immigration policy standpoint, the biggest challenge for stakeholder participants was with helping international students in their employment-related struggles. For Fiona (37 y/o), an International Student and Scholar Advisor at a public university located in the South Atlantic region, “the most difficult part” was related to “work authorization-related issues and restrictions.” It was an overwhelming task for some of the stakeholder respondents to explain to their international students why they were not U.S. employers’ first choice despite their sufficient qualifications. Ronda (31 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a private research university located in the Midwest-East North Central region, elaborated on that issue:

The students I work with are searching for job opportunities and often find it difficult to get hired. Many companies are reluctant to hire international students because they don’t want to have to sponsor them in the future, and language and cultural barriers pose issues through the hiring process.

Some stakeholder participants tackled the issue of restrictive employment policies from the start by telling their international students it would not be an easy journey. For example, Abby (28 y/o), an International Student Pathway Program Advisor at a private research university in New England, found it difficult yet necessary to have such conversations with her students from the very beginning of their journeys to prepare them for reality. Abby explained the idea behind her strategy:

[I do the best I can by] helping [my international students] to set realistic expectations about internships and working in the U.S. and remaining in the U.S. after their program. I work with them at the very start of their time at [X-University] so they don’t need immediate answers necessarily but often ask questions about work, especially ... graduate students who are more career-focused. It is important for me to make sure they understand how realistic this is, and what they can do to improve their chances.

Kevin (30 y/o), a Co-Founder of a For-Profit Business in New England serving international students in all parts of the United States, had witnessed first-hand how difficult
it was for international students to obtain employment authorization when he had tried to hire qualified international students to work for his company. “Making sure [international students] were legal to work in the United States” for prolonged periods of time was a “tedious endeavor,” said Kevin, since many of the students who were currently in school could only do a short-term practical training, and those who had already graduated, and who he had sponsored for a work visa, ended up “getting their H-1B applications denied because they were not picked in the lottery.”

**Inequality.** Jusamby (50 y/o), a Therapist serving undergraduate international students at a private all-women’s university in New England and Professor teaching graduate international students at the same institution’s Social Work program, expressed her frustrations with how immigration policies deprived international students of equal opportunities that their domestic peers had access to. Jusamby elaborated:

> I think the biggest frustration [with regard to international students is] ... of not being able to access the same services/scholarships as struggling domestic students can access ... as well as helping others understand [that] these students aren’t taking a place of U.S. students and often face very real financial and emotional difficulties without access to support that domestic students otherwise have.

Vivien (50 y/o), an International Student and Scholar Advisor at a public research university in New England, echoed Jusamby’s concern on the financial aspect of the issue. She stated that being “unable to help [international students] with financial scholarship” was the most frustrating part of her job. “There is only so much you can do,” admitted Vivien.

Jambo (46 y/o), a Fellow International Student/ green card holder who had never held an F-1 status and who was currently studying at a public research university in New England, also touched upon the issue of inequality in opportunities for international students as compared to their American peers. Jambo elaborated:
International students are at a disadvantage because they might not know the software an American student might have learned in high school and other skills. They [international students] have a disadvantage in the first place. Already, right away. And they [U.S. employers] want to hire the best.

Adel (52 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a public research university located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, was also concerned with the inequality aspect as it related to international students’ access to U.S. education due to the astronomical tuition costs required of F-1 students:

The ... thing that is very difficult is that the American educational system has gotten out of control with costs. We have eliminated the possibility of this opportunity for so many students around the world because of the outrageous expense that is now U.S. education.

Adel was particularly embittered by the fact that it was a relatively recent phenomenon. “It didn't use to be this way,” she stated. “Average income students could afford to come to the U.S. in the past. Not anymore,” Adel concluded.

Ethical dilemmas. Some stakeholder participants revealed that the biggest challenge in dealing with international students’ issues was the fact that they had often found themselves in an ethical dilemma when trying to help their students. For example, Lola (39 y/o), an Academic Advisor to International Students at a public research university located in the Midwest-East North Central region, admitted that it was difficult for her to have to say “no” to her students because she had to follow the law. Although in her heart Lola felt empathetic to their aspirations, she had to set the priorities:

The most difficult [part] is making sure that I am being ethical but yet helpful. Many students want to stay in this country and seeing the situation of my parents who left [their] country ...., I understand. But at the same time, I need to follow the policies set by the government. Yet wanting to be helpful to the students.

Unlike Lola, Sophia (33 y/o), who had also served as an international student advisor in the past at the private ESL School (New England) where she was currently holding a position of
an HR Director, confessed that she “knew that a lot of [her] students were working, but since [she] had the same experience when [she] was in the same position [being a former international student], it was a conflict of interests.” “So, I advised students to not do it [work],” said Sophia. “My job was to advise, and that’s what I did,” she continued. “However, I do look away if I see them working without authorization,” Sophia admitted.

**F-1 students’ feeling of entitlement.** Another big challenge brought to light by some of the stakeholder participants was the one of international students’ feeling of entitlement. For example, Adel (52 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a public research university located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, found it to be the most difficult and even “disturbing” part of working with international students:

*For me, the hardest thing about working with internationals is the entitlement some feel toward the U.S., that we owe them something, instead of being humble and appreciative. Luckily, this is rare, but when I do encounter it, it is very disturbing to me.*

In the same vein, Dee (44 y/o), an International Student Advisor working at a private technology-focused university in New England, also shared her experience of having had to deal with some “hard-headed” students:

*There was this one student who was really pushy with his OPT application. He did not respect the deadlines set out by our office and kept treating me like I was his servant. Another example is when a student asked me for an I-94 form, something that anyone can do on their own, it’s available online, and I had to go look for it. It’s like, God, do it yourself!*

**Institutional policies.** Another theme that came out of my conversations with stakeholder participants about the biggest challenges of their work and/or interactions with international students was that of inadequate institutional policies existing within their organizations. For example, Jazz (32 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a public research university based in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, admitted that there was
no consistent structure adjudicated by the higher level administration at her institution that everyone could simply follow and refer to. Jazz said that “[everyone had] different views on how things should be done” at her institution, and this would result in “chaos” with regard to student advising, as “[international students] were constantly receiving inconsistent messages from different people.”

Comparatively related to the idea of ineffectiveness of existing institutional policies was the one of deficit in staff who could adequately serve international students on campus. For example, Yomar (45 y/o), the Dean of International Student Affairs at a private liberal arts college located in the Midwest-East North Central region, shared that “a lot of [international] students lack[ed] any on-site support and [we]re not used to relying on people outside of their family for support.” In contrast, one respondent mentioned their lack of knowledge and thus, lack of capacity to help international students in a meaningful way, despite having sufficient staff assigned to work with international students. “I wish I had more time to learn how to help [international students],” admitted Ximena (37 y/o), an ESL Instructor at a private liberal arts college in New England. “It is not an easy experience for them, and [it] takes a great deal of time to learn what is needed for them to be comfortable and fully accustomed,” she concluded.

**Language, culture, academic integrity.** Several stakeholders talked about some of the more traditional challenges that have already been largely addressed within the existing corpus of scholarly literature on international students. These challenges included linguistic and cultural barriers as well as issues with academic integrity. For example, Libby (23 y/o), an International Student Services Specialist who worked at a public research university located in the Midwest-North East Central region, found “language barrier” to be the most
challenging part of her work with international students. Libby was frustrated with “not always being able to effectively communicate with students” because, in her view, miscommunications resulted in international students “simply not understanding what resources they even ha[d] access to.” For Bob (31 y/o), an International Student Admissions Counselor and Advisor at a private music-focused HEI in New England, intercultural barrier was something that he was struggling with the most. Bob explained:

The most difficult part of working with international students is encountering so many different cultural expectations for how a student expects me or my institution to interact with them. For example, ... working hours, speed of response, the amount of responsibility placed on the student, and so on.

Meanwhile, Jason (42 y/o), a College Counselor and Academic Advisor for Chinese Students at a boarding high school located in the Midwest-East North Central region, was struggling with the issues related to academic integrity:

Most recently the biggest issue we have been dealing with is academic integrity. Almost all of my students have been caught cheating in one form or another. Some in small ways, some have had university admissions decisions rescinded.

The ultimate conclusion that I drew based on the empirical data obtained from the stakeholder participants, was that in the bigger picture, most of the challenges identified by the respondents, had, in fact, developed from their inability to change anything due to the external factors. A continuous theme of “there is only so much you can do” flowing throughout my conversations with the stakeholders, was, by far, a dominant one.

Views on Current F-1 Employment-Related Immigration Policies

Since the central research question of the study revolved around socio-economic well-being of international students who worked, it was essential to inquire about what my stakeholder participants thought about current employment-related immigration policies
outlined for international F-1 students by the U.S. government. Data showed that most stakeholder participants (77.5%) thought that current immigration policies related to F-1 students’ employment rights were too restrictive and should be revisited, whereas 9% thought that the policies were fair; 4.5% even thought that they were too lenient. Another 9% of the respondents admitted that since they were not well-versed in the immigration policies, they did not have an opinion. See Table 9 below for the visual summary of the stakeholders’ views on F-1 employment policies.

Table 9

Stakeholder Participants: Views on F-1 Employment-Related Immigration Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Too restrictive</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Too lenient</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4.5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Too restrictive. Most stakeholder participants saw current employment policies for F-1 students as too restrictive. For example, Ximena (37 y/o), an ESL Instructor at a private liberal arts college in New England, thought that because of the immigration policies, “most international students struggle[d] to contribute to society” in a meaningful way because they could not “work as abundantly as they would like to,” which in turn made it “difficult for them to fully enjoy their study-abroad experience.”

Jusamby (50 y/o), a Therapist serving undergraduate international students and Professor teaching international students on the graduate level at a private all-women’s university in New England, believed that the policies were “too restrictive” because they “den[ied] autonomy and the right to work to young people.” In addition, Jusamby noted that such policies “create[d] unnecessary financial struggle” for international students. She was
dissatisfied with how even on-campus jobs, which were legally allowed for F-1 students to undertake, were not meeting the actual needs of students. Jusamby indicated that “colleges … need[ed] to exam why they [we]re asking students to work for so little.”

According to Dee (44 y/o), an International Student Advisor working at a private technology-focused university in New England, current immigration policies on work restrictions for F-1 students were inadequate. She explained.

> There is a perception that international students are illegal, or they are just immigrants, the general pool. But they are legal and doing everything right, and we are taking their rights away from them.

And Ronda (31 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a private research university in New England, pointed out that not only F-1 students “[we]re severely hampered in their ability to gain hands-on experience in their fields,” they were also deprived of the autonomy to “support themselves financially because of the policies” that were currently in place.

For Kevin (30 y/o), a U.S.-born Co-Founder of a for-profit business based in New England and whose main customers were international students in the United States, it simply did not make sense why the government required F-1 students to go through so many hassles in order to be able to work. Kevin elaborated:

> You shouldn't need a social security number to be able to work in the United States. If you graduate from college it should be easier to get a proper visa to stay and work here.

“Policies are unfair because … compare the cost of living here and in your country, it’s vast!”, emphasized Jambo (46 y/o), a Fellow Non-U.S.-born Graduate Student studying at a public research university in New England/ green card holder who had never been in an F-1 status. “If they [international students] compete for an on-campus job, an American will get it,” he added.
Sophia (33 y/o), an HR Director currently working at a private ESL School in New England and a former international student advisor, stated that current policies were abetting exploitation. Sophia noted:

_A lot of people know about restrictions and take advantage of the students. They pay them eight dollars an hour instead of twenty dollars an hour._

Rogelio (34 y/o), a Fellow U.S.-born Graduate Student studying at a public research university in New England, also said that he “knew a lot of international students working for cash under the table.” So, he posed a question: “Why not make it [unrestricted access to the U.S. labor market] legal?” Rogelio elaborated:

_[International students] should be able to work .... I understand the side that they should be focusing on their studies, but I worked through college, why can’t they have the same opportunity? And if we are talking about inclusion, why not introduce them to the culture and language in the workplace? That’s where it’s all at._

Finally, Eva (35 y/o), an International Student Services Specialist working at a private research university located in the South Atlantic region, thought that current employment policies for F-1 students were “not necessarily benefiting the U.S. economy.” Eva believed that immigration policies “should be more flexible in order to benefit all,” implying that by denying international students access to full participation in the U.S. labor market, the government not only disadvantaged F-1 students’ aspirations, but also deprived the economy from growing.

**Suggestive revisions.** Some of the suggestive revisions to current policies’ revisions included:

- Allowing “F-1 students to work off campus” and having “EAD [Employment Authorization Document] cards come quicker” (Libby, 23 y/o, higher-generation
American, International Student Programming Specialist, public research university, Midwest-East North Central)

- Allowing international students to “at least hold jobs off campus while studying in the U.S.” as well as “bring[ing] down the cost for small businesses to sponsor internationals” (Yomar, 45 y/o, first-generation immigrant from Cote D’Ivoire, Dean of International Student Affairs, private liberal arts college, Midwest-East North Central)

- Creating “more flexibility in when, where, and for how long students can work” (Ronda, 31 y/o, higher-generation American, International Student Advisor, private research university, New England)

- Providing “longer OPT time period for all majors, not just STEM. It would give a better opportunity to prove abilities/knowledge to employer. Sometimes one year is not enough” (Fiona, 37 y/o, first-generation immigrant from Bulgaria, International Student and Scholar Advisor, public research university, South Atlantic)

- Building “a two year work requirement … into the F visa regulation … while in school and a two year post-degree [work requirement] for every student in every degree. Students that do not need or want to work can opt out of that … versus the way it is now where they must apply for work authorization each time” (Lenny, 46 y/o, first-generation immigrant from Mexico, International Student Advisor, public community college, New England).

- Creating a “priority pathway through H-1B or other way for students who earned degrees from U.S. institutions …. The lottery does not adequately serve this population” (Bob, 31 y/o, higher-generation American, International Student Admissions Counselor and Advisor at a private music-focused HEI, New England)
- Providing “more H-1B visas so students have the opportunities to work for longer periods of time as OPT is only for one academic year, except some programs” (Sandra, 45 y/o, first-generation immigrant from Guatemala, International Student Advisor, public community college in New England).

**Fair.** Two stakeholder respondents (9%) thought that the current policies related to international students’ employment rights in the United States were fair. “The ability to work is the difference between student visa and green card,” stated Lola (39 y/o), a U.S.-born Academic Advisor to International Students at a public research university located in the Midwest-East North Central.

Similarly, Abby (28 y/o), a U.S.-born International Student Pathways Program Advisor who currently worked at a private research university in New England, suggested that employment-related immigration regulations for F-1 students were out there for a reason. “I think they [immigration policies] are fair,” said Abby. She justified her view in the following manner:

> I understand why these policies are in place ..., they are there to protect the United States and our economy.

However, Abby also thought “restrictions around obtaining internship experience” could be modified. Abby clarified that in her opinion, international students should be able to get internships “as long as they are NOT PAID” and are “a legitimate learning experience for the student.” Ultimately, a fair policy on F-1 student employment would be the one that does not have “legal … restrictions … for obtaining and securing” an internship, as long as such form of employment is unpaid and is tied to the program.

**Too lenient.** Finally, one stakeholder participant (4.5%) thought that the current immigration policies for international students were too lenient. Adel (52 y/o), a U.S.-born
International Student Advisor at a public research university located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, believed that CPT and OPT programs should not even be in place for international students. “Employment-based immigration should be employer-sponsored, not school-sponsored,” stated Adel. She elaborated further:

\[
F-1 \text{ visa is a study visa, not a work visa .... This may not be a popular stance in this field, but that is because I understand how badly our laws and practices and mission have been abused, and how far off-point we have become.}
\]

Despite having had “travelled and lived abroad” and seeing “herself as a domestic ambassador for the U.S.,” at the end of the day, what Adel considered to be an ideal outcome of international F-1 students’ experiences, was to learn from the “Americans” and “take that knowledge and attitude home with them and spread it around.” This indicated that Adel saw the United States as a role model for the rest of the world, and that the United States was superior in its values as compared to the rest of the world. Adel continued:

\[
The \text{ State Department will ... deny issuing an F-1 visa if the intent of the purpose is not study but rather employment .... [Therefore], I would eliminate CPT and OPT for almost all students, and have universities petition the government for approval for rare cases of necessary/ required CPT. I believe it is an inappropriate use of educational institutions and DSOs to conduct employment-based immigration.}
\]

In all fairness, however, Adel justified her opinion by saying that it was simply impossible for advisors to control what was happening outside of their schools. She stated:

\[
There \text{ is no way a school can have proper oversight of a student while they are working at a different company.}
\]

Ultimately, for Adel, the only type of employment that international F-1 students should be entitled to undertake, was “on-campus employment.”

**Summary.** In the end, 77.5% of the respondents thought that current employment-related immigration policies for F-1 students were too restrictive. Most of the stakeholder participants who were advocating for change, i.e. revisiting the policies and making them
more inclusive of international students’ needs, were first-generation immigrants. The following characteristics were assigned to the current policies: depriving financial autonomy, violating rights, complicated, unfair, lacking flexibility, abetting exploitation, and disadvantaging the U.S. economy.

Suggestive revisions to the current policies included allowing international students to work off campus without any restrictions, bringing down the cost for small businesses to sponsor international students, extending OPT duration periods for all majors, not just for STEM, creating tangible pathways towards employment opportunities to all international student graduates of U.S. universities, increasing the number of H-1B slots, as well as building a two year work requirement into the F visa regulations while international students are in school and a two year post-degree work requirement for every student in every degree.

Nine percent of the respondents considered the policies to be fair; 4.5% thought that the regulations were too lenient, and 9% did not have an opinion because they were not well-versed in immigration policies. In sum, those who did not think that employment policies for F-1 students were at all restrictive or otherwise did not have an opinion (22.5% total), were all U.S.-born.

**F-1 employment-related immigration policies: the degree of fairness.** When speaking about current F-1 employment-related immigration policies with my stakeholder participants, I also wanted to gain a deeper understanding of whether they thought it was a fair argument that international students should not be allowed to freely work wherever and for whomever they wanted because without such restrictions, international students would be taking U.S. citizens’ and U.S. residents' jobs.
Sixty-eight percent of the stakeholder participants did not think that employment-related immigration policies currently imposed on international F-1 students were fair, stating that international students should be able to get a job over less qualified American workers, which would only boost the U.S. economy and allow the country to be more competitive in the global race for talent. Twenty-three percent thought that the policies were fair, explaining that current regulations were in place to protect the country and its economy. Whereas 4.5% did not know how to answer the question, and the other 4.5% said that it was difficult for them to produce a straightforward answer, as each case should be viewed individually. See Table 10 below for the summary of the data presented above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
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<td>23%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Unfair.** Most stakeholder respondents (68%) did not think that it was a fair argument that the restrictions imposed on F-1 students’ employment rights were out there to protect U.S. workers. For example, Caleb (29 y/o), a Sales Manager at a For-Profit organization based in New England and whose customers were predominantly international students, “underst[ood] the logic behind the argument,” however he thought that “risk [wa]s outweighed by the positive that international students br[ought] to the U.S.” Caleb elaborated on his point of view:

*For example, they [international students] pay higher tuition, they spend money in the economy and provide cultural diversity that helps U.S. students grow as individuals. So, although an international student may work a job that would
otherwise have gone to a U.S. citizen, I think the international student is still an economic net positive for the U.S.

Other stakeholders built their arguments in a similar fashion. For example, Ronda (31 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a private research university in New England, said that “international students [we]re here to study a particular field and apply their expertise, not to take opportunities away from anyone else.” In the same vein, Libby (23 y/o), an International Student Services Specialist at a public research university located in the Midwest-East North Central region, stated that “companies [we]re less likely to hire international students” to begin with because it was “expensive to sponsor an H-1B.” Libby continued:

I don't think they would be ‘taking jobs’ – international students are only getting hired because that means there is a lack of qualified Americans to do said job.

Fiona (37 y/o), an International Student and Scholar Advisor at a public research university based in the South Atlantic region, made an analogous statement:

I believe people should be hired based on abilities, experience, and education, not nationality.

Similarly, Jusamby (50 y/o, Therapist/ Professor, private all-women’s university, New England) supported that view by explaining that “it should be a fair and open labor market,” especially “for the period of the student visa.” So did Kevin (30 y/o, Co-Founder of a For-Profit Business serving international students, New England), in whose mind international students were “hard-working and smart people,” and that the United States “should want” those people in the country, as they would be “adding to the GDP … if anything.”

Sandra (45 y/o, International Student Advisor, public community college, New England) provided yet another supporting response:
I think international students are not taking U.S. citizens' and U.S. residents’ jobs, these students have additional/special skills that some of the U.S citizens and residents don't have; therefore, they cannot execute those type of jobs. I believe international students should be allowed to apply and demonstrate their skills and experience wherever they would like to work.

Rogelio (34 y/o, Fellow U.S.-born Graduate Student, public research university, New England) elaborated on the discussed topic even further by trying to look at the problem from his own, personal standpoint, not just within the framework of the U.S. economy and its labor market. Rogelio contemplated:

A college student is definitely not gonna take my job. But jobs that other students are already doing, such as waiting tables, they are temporary jobs. Bottom line, most qualified people should get the job regardless of who they are. As an employer, wouldn’t you want that? Would you rather have someone who can make 15 hamburgers an hour or someone who can make 50 hamburgers an hour? I never understood why we train students here and then boot them out, so they compete against the U.S. And as a father, if my son wouldn’t get a job because of an international student finalist, I would feel bad for my son, but he shouldn’t limit himself to one job. I’d tell him: ‘what did you learn from the interview? Let’s do some mock interviews and do better next time.’

Stakeholder respondents who did not agree with the currently-so-popular public opinion about international students’ potential of taking jobs from U.S. citizens or permanent residents, given a hypothetical scenario where current employment-related restrictions were lifted off, also mentioned that the current policies were in misalignment with the United States’ values. Ximena (37 y/o, ESL Instructor, private liberal arts college, New England) attested to that:

United States was founded on and is a country of newcomers/international individuals. I understand the need to avoid unemployment, but I do not believe this [international students’ access to the U.S. labor market] is the cause.

Fair. Some stakeholders, however, thought that current immigration regulations were in place within the law for the purpose of protecting the jobs of U.S. citizens and permanent residents. For example, Abby (28 y/o, International Student Pathway Program Advisor,
private research university, New England) said that “this [the fact that international students would otherwise take U.S. jobs had there not been any restrictions] c[ould] be said about a U.S. citizen in another country.” Abby posed a question:

_Should we be able to work freely without restrictions? No. Individual countries must protect themselves and their residents._

Lola (39 y/o, Academic Advisor to International Students, public research university, Midwest-East North Central) had a similar line of reasoning. “The ability to work is the difference between a student visa and a green card,” she specified. And Yomar (45 y/o, Dean of International Student Affairs, private liberal arts college, Midwest-East North Central), despite the fact that he had once been an international student in the United States himself, also thought that regulations were fair. Yomar elaborated on his viewpoint:

_Ultimately, it is about prioritizing the citizens of the U.S. ... so it’s fair ... but I also do think the employers should ultimately get a bigger say in who they want to hire based on quality and skills, as long as they demonstrate that they are not hiring a former or current international because of lower salaries._

In general terms, the main justification of the stakeholder respondents’ views on why current restrictions imposed on international students’ unregulated employment were fair, was the presumption that those regulations were in place to protect U.S. workers. As Bob (31 y/o, International Admissions Counselor and Advisor, private music-focused HEI, New England) neatly summarized, “if the purpose of your visa is to study full time, then certain limitations make sense.”

**International Students’ Experiences in a Workplace**

Before diving into the inquiry on one’s perceptions of the potential impact of employment-related immigration policies on F-1 students’ socio-economic well-being, the central research question of the study, I wanted to see whether my stakeholder participants
had at any point encountered international students who had shared with them any negative stories about their experiences in a workplace. As a result, 50% of the respondents had never heard of cases of employer mistreatment, whereas 45.5% shared examples of negative experiences based on the stories their international students had shared with them in the past. One respondent (4.5) heard of both negative and positive stories.

**Never heard of negative experiences.** Eleven stakeholder respondents (50%) admitted to having had never heard of stories where international students experienced any sort of mistreatment at work. “This hasn't been relevant to my student population,” said Abby (28 y/o), an International Student Pathway Program Advisor at a private research university in New England. “Most students from my university had very positive experience,” confirmed Bob (31 y/o), an International Student Admissions Counselor and Advisor at a private music focused HEI in New England. Similar response was provided by Kevin (31 y/o, Co-Founder of a For-Profit Business servicing international students, New England), who had hired and worked along international student in the past. “I didn't hear anything, and we worked hard to try and provide an even opportunity for international students,” said Kevin.

**Heard of unfair treatment.** Ten stakeholder participants (45.5%) said that they had heard stories about international students being treated unfairly at work. The respondents shared examples where they had heard of international students not being paid for their work; cases where international students were underpaid, overworked, or forced to work under the table; stories where international students felt excluded from certain work activities and not given equal access to information about their rights as employees; cases where F-1 students had to deal with supervisors who were impatient, who were fired without notice for taking
sick days, and denied a job or an H-1B visa sponsorship due to the complexity of the immigration paperwork that had to be completed. There was even one story that reported a case of sexual harassment.

**Not paid or underpaid.** Yomar (45 y/o), the Dean of International Students at a private liberal arts college based in the Midwest-East North Central region, admitted that “often times [international students] realize[d] that they [we]re being paid less than U.S. counterparts.” Similarly, Jambo (46 y/o, Fellow Non-U.S.-born Graduate Student/ green card holder who never held an F-1 status, public research university, New England), heard of cases where international students “d[id] not get appropriate remuneration.” Jambo revealed that he knew of “a lot of F-1 students who struggle[d]” with unequal pay. In his understanding, that was happening “because the policies [we]re not realistic.”

**Nonimmigrant status discrimination.** Work-related mistreatment was also identified to have had been taking place at the very first step within the job application process. For example, Sandra (45 y/o, International Student Advisor, public community college, New England) disclosed that many of her students had difficulties with even getting through their first interview due to their nonimmigrant status, despite being qualified for a job they were applying to. Sandra elaborated:

*Through the interview process, the employer would indicate to the student that they don't hire international students because the process to hire an international student is complex.*

Furthermore, even those international students who had managed to get a job, found themselves in situations with limited pathways to continue working there, according to Lenny (46 y/o), another International Student Advisor who also worked for a community
college in New England. Lenny shared his frustration with what his international students had told him they were going through:

Even after going through all the loop and hoop to be able to work while an international student, they [international students] get paid less in some cases, they get overworked, promised the H-1B, and it never happens, and they are not selected for positions because companies do not know how or want to sponsor the H visa.

Employers’ lack of compassion. At times, work supervisors lacked compassion towards international students, according to some stakeholders. For example, Libby (23 y/o), an International Student Programming Specialist at a public research university based in the Midwest-East North Central region, “generally th[ought] [that] students sometimes ha[d] supervisors who d[id]n’t have patience to work with international students.” Similarly, Adel (52 y/o), an International Student Advisor who worked for a public research university located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, shared examples where international students were mistreated by their supervisors, with the latter being insensitive to F-1 students’ needs. Adel shared:

There was a situation where an international PhD student felt overworked and mal-treated by the Principal Investigator in the lab. He had a very difficult experience and was able to change labs and projects. I knew another student who was fired for taking his sick leave days when he was sick. He was fired without notice.

Unauthorized labor. Some stories revealed an issue of international students working without authorization, which naturally fostered their negative experiences in the workplace. “A lot of people confessed [that they were working under the table], and I also saw a lot of people working who weren’t supposed to,” admitted Sophia (33 y/o), HR Director at a private New-England-based ESL School and a former international student advisor. “But I closed my eyes on it,” she confessed. “It feels weird when you see them at school and your eyes meet,” Sophia continued. She also shared that one student even reported a case of sexual
harassment to her, but could not do anything about it due to the illegal nature of their employment:

One person went through sexual harassment .... It’s common in the restaurant industry. It’s a cash industry.

Rogelio (34 y/o, Fellow U.S.-born Graduate Student, public research university, New England) also witnessed some stories that were similar in nature. “Yes, I’ve heard some terrible stories. Like not being paid for what [international students] should have been” or “doing extra tasks that they are not responsible for,” shared Rogelio. He also elaborated on why he thought that was happening:

Employers have power cause when you are working illegally, you don’t have a say. Not everyone, of course .... But the fact that some students have to work under the table, opens the possibility for abuse.

Excluded/ disengaged. Yomar (45 y/o), the Dean of International Students at a private liberal arts college based in the Midwest-East North Central region, admitted that in addition to being underpaid, international students “[we]re not included in some office activities, and [we]re not given equal access to information about their rights as employees,” which fostered their feeling of exclusion. Similarly, Jambo (46 y/o, Fellow Non-U.S.-born Graduate Student/ green card holder who never held an F-1 status, public research university, New England) stated that in addition to being underpaid, international students “d[id] not feel fully engaged in a workplace” because their voices were dismissed due to their foreign accent or cultural differences.

Other. One stakeholder (4.5%), Ximena (37 y/o), an ESL Instructor at a private liberal arts college in New England, shared that she had “found this [mistreatment of international students at work] and the opposite to be true.” Ximena elaborated:
Some international students experienced language barriers and were treated as if they were less apt than those who spoke English fluently and without an international accent. I also found at times they were considered an asset to the business because of their international status. This was, for example, when needing to interact with clients who spoke the same language or were from the same country.

Summary. Ultimately, stakeholders’ responses on whether at any point they had encountered international students who would share their experiences of having been treated unfairly at work, were divided. Fifty percent never heard of anything like that, 45.5% said that they did, and one respondent heard of both negative and positive stories. See Table 11 below for the summary of the stakeholder responses on whether they had heard of any stories of F-1 students’ negative experiences in a workplace.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>Number</strong></td>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, see Table E.33 in Appendix E for the list of characteristics identified by the respondents related to international students’ negative experiences at work.

Impact of Employment-Related Immigration Policies on International F-1 Students’ Socio-Economic Well-Being

As a multifaceted concept that combines within itself many variables that address individual needs (Baryshev and Kashchuk, 2016), socio-economic well-being is a phenomenon that is shaped and understood in accordance with one’s values assigned to it. Therefore, it was equally important for me to evaluate stakeholder participants’ perceptions
of F-1 students’ socio-economic well-being in the face of employment-related immigration policies, just as it was indisputably essential to hear from the students themselves. Earlier findings presented in the section on student participants, showed that the majority of the student sample, felt that current restrictive policies affected their socio-economic well-being in a negative way.

Similarly, most stakeholder respondents (77%) thought that current employment-related immigration policies outlined within the federal regulations for nonimmigrant F-1 students, definitely affected their socio-economic well-being. In addition, 9% of the stakeholder participants said that even though it was likely, they simply did not have any first-hand information to be a 100% sure, and 14% did not know the answer to the question.

Negative impact. Being unreasonably restrictive and thus, not only contributing to international students’ financial struggles, but also leading to their exclusion from full and equal engagement in the life of the U.S. community, such policies undeniably heightened F-1 students’ feeling of socio-economic insecurity, according to most stakeholder respondents.

Financial insecurity. The theme of financial struggles resulting from current employment policies was a recurrent one. Sophia (33 y/o, HR Director/ former international student advisor, private ESL School, New England), stated that most of her students were continuously hustling for cash, and even sought her assistance with finding them a job:

Majority of my students expressed financial struggles. One would come to me and say: ‘I don’t know how I’m gonna survive next semester. Do you know anyone who is looking for a housekeeper or cook or babysitter?’ They were new to the country and didn’t know how to survive.

Being “limited to on-campus opportunities” (Eva, 35 y/o, International Student Services Specialist, private research university, South Atlantic), employment policies were deemed to be inadequate of the actual financial needs of international students. Jambo (46 y/o), Fellow
Graduate Student/ green card holder who had never held an F-1 status, public research university, New England), stated that not only on-campus jobs were competitive and unlikely to obtain by international students, the type of money one could make at those jobs, was nowhere near enough to satisfy the costs of living. Jambo clarified:

_The highest you can get is like $700 a month working a campus job. Unless you can rely on your family, how can you survive?... If you compare the cost of living here [United States] and in your home country, it’s vast! You have to pay rent, pay for tuition, phone bills, internet, food clothing .... If you don’t have the resources, you are going to struggle ..., it’s so unfair._

It became clear from my conversations with the stakeholders, that it was a particular challenge for those international students who did not come from wealthy families to maintain a good quality of life while studying in the United States. “Not every international student in this country has sufficient funds to cover their expenses without a job,” noted Libby (23 y/o), an International Student Programming Specialist who worked at a public research university based in the Midwest-East North Central region. And according to Jusamby (50 y/o, Mental Health Counselor for undergraduate international students/ Professor of graduate international students in the Social Work program, private all-women’ university, New England), even those international students who had full scholarships, were still struggling financially and emotionally due to the fact that they could not work more hours than was allowed by law. Jusamby elaborated on her frustration with the employment policies limitations:

_International students are only allowed to work a particular number of hours a week, and this limits their earning power.... The full ride only covers food and board. Students still require funds for living and clothing and travel to and from their home countries. If families of students are impoverished, these expenses place great stress on the student and their families. And families sometimes come to resent the student for burdening them with these unforeseen extra costs. The ability to work extra hours would enable students to have more emotional and financial freedoms from such burdens._
Preventing immigration. Rogelio (34, Fellow U.S.-born Graduate Student, public research university, New England) could also attest to the fact that “money was tight” for a lot of his peers, based on multiple conversations he had with international students in his graduate program. However, Rogelio also brought in another perspective on the issue by stating that the reason some students would find themselves in a bad financial situation in the first place, was because being a student was not necessarily their priority, but was a way of getting into the United States with an ultimate goal of staying:

Oh yeah, those policies are ridiculous. I’ve heard a lot of international students complaining about not being able to work or having to work under the table .... Money is so tight, everything is so expensive, everyone is living together, like six-seven people living in a three-bedroom apartment. You can’t study home when so many people live in one place. That affects their quality of life. They are trying to save money. A lot of them don’t have the money ...., they ‘technically’ got approved by the U.S. on their finances to get the visa, but it’s not always true. They are just trying to get into the country.

F-1 employment-related immigration policies were a strong barrier deliberately constructed by policy makers to make it difficult for international students to stay in the United States after graduation, according to Sandra (45 y/o, first-generation immigrant from Guatemala, International Student Advisor, community college, New England) and Lenny (46 y/o, first-generation immigrant from Mexico, International Student Advisor, community college, New England). “They [policies] make it very difficult for [international students] to find work,” stated Sandra, “and limit the types of jobs international students can apply for if they want to stay in the United States after they are finished with school,” she added.

For many [international students] that see the U.S. degree as a gateway to careers in the U.S., immigration policies rapidly and harshly tell them that it will be an uphill battle...in most cases only the financially able or lucky will reach this goal. (Lenny, 46 y/o, first-generation immigrant from Mexico, International Student Advisor, community college, New England).
Without any kind of financial security in place or “luck,” it could be very difficult for international students to build a career in the United States, considering it being their ultimate goal and main reason for pursuing a U.S. degree in the first place, according to Lenny.

**Depriving of opportunity for meaningful career development.** Immigration policies related to F-1 students’ ability to gain employment in the United States in general, were seen as inadequate by those stakeholders whose main concern was with international students’ limited ability to gain U.S. work experience, regardless of whether they wanted to stay in the United States or not. Their biggest argument was that international students needed better opportunities, including having more lenient employment-related immigration policies in place, as well as to be able to grow their experience in order to succeed in their future careers. “[International students] have restricted access to internships and opportunities to engage with their future professional field, which makes them less attractive to potential employers,” stated Yomar (45 y/o), the Dean of International Student Affairs at a private liberal arts college based in the Midwest-East North Central region of the United States.

Several stakeholders emphasized how difficult it was to obtain a job after graduation due to such factors as not being able to secure OPT on time, restrictive OPT policies affecting the type of companies or jobs international students could apply for, and OPT policies being incompatible with a gig economy. As Lola (39 y/o), an Academic Advisor to International Students at a public research university based in the Midwest-East North Central region, neatly summarized:

*International students’ socio-economic well-being is affected if they don’t have an opportunity to work in the U.S. after they earn a degree in the U.S. because the competition in their home countries will be challenging if they don’t have any employment experience in the U.S.*
Additionally, as noted by Ximena (37 y/o), an ESL Instructor at a private liberal arts college in New England, the mere fact of completing a degree in the United States, was not enough to compete in the global economy. Ximena specified:

*Even though international students may have certain degrees, certifications ... in other countries, they must start from the beginning ..., nothing to my knowledge was transferable.*

Ultimately, employment experience is not only valuable for a number of reasons stated in the above section, but it is as something that is transferable and can promote a global exchange of diverse practices, which would benefit everyone around the world.

**The degree of F-1 students’ financial struggle.** The level of one’s financial security may directly affect their socio-economic well-being. Therefore, with an attempt to dig deeper into the phenomenon of international students’ socio-economic well-being, I wanted to inquire further about my stakeholder participants perceptions on international F-1 students’ financial security. Findings showed that most stakeholder respondents (82%) thought that international students were, in fact, struggling financially (according to 64%), at least to some extent (according to 18%).

**International students who struggle financially.** “Not having the ability to work greatly impact[ed] the manner in which [international students] live[d] while studying in the United States,” according to Lenny (46 y/o, International Student Advisor, community college, New England). While a continuous growth of tuition costs only exacerbated the issue, in Sandra’s (45 y/o, International Student Advisor, public community college, New England) opinion, who elaborated on that element further:

*I have heard many stories where students face many financially barriers. One of those barriers is the high cost of tuition, and, as we know, these students have employment restrictions and face the fear that they can jeopardize their status or fall out of status if they cannot pay for their tuition. Also, some of the students face*
unexpectedly situations in which their families or sponsor cannot continue paying for their tuition and personal expenses, so the students face a drastic financial struggle.

Jusamby (50 y/o, Therapist/ Professor, private all-women’s university, New England) emphasized that such struggle extended to international students’ families:

Their [international students’] families struggle in some way to help them complete [their programs of study] and [be able to] compete in the U.S. college marketplace.

Family’s financial situation played a huge role in how economically secure international students felt, according to Yomar (45 y/o, Dean of International Student Affairs, private liberal arts college, Midwest-East North Central):

It is often a story of extremes where some internationals come from well-off families who don’t worry about money, and others are from families that are middle class and therefore sacrifice a lot to send their kids abroad.

Yomar added that another contributing aspect where international students might have found themselves in a financially insecure situation, related to “how [international students’] home currency often [lost] to the U.S. dollar during harsh economic times.” When that happened, students had a difficult time sustaining themselves financially, as gaining employment was not easy due to restrictive immigration policies.

Furthermore, for those who might have had even secured a job, the USCIS delays in the processing of international students’ applications for an employment authorization document (EAD), would stand in the way. Libby (23 y/o, International Student Programming Specialist, public research university, Midwest-East North Central) attested to that:

I know students who have recently had to have money wired to them because of EAD card delays ..., many students struggle with this.

Another valuable observation, revealed by Jason (42 y/o), a College Counselor and an Academic Advisor to Chinese Students who worked at a boarding high school based in the
Midwest-East North Central region, focused on the notion that international students’ status of being wealthy should never be assumed:

*While my students present themselves as extremely wealthy, some confide in me privately about the sacrifices their families made for them to study here.*

Ultimately, if international students’ families did not come from money, they most definitely would have some degree of financial hurdle. As Jambo (46 y/o), Fellow Graduate Student from Sierra Leone/ green card holder who had never been in an F-1 status, public university, New England), had already stated earlier, “if you don’t have resources, you are going to struggle.”

**It varies.** Four respondents (18%) said that it varied. For example, Rogelio (34 y/o, Fellow U.S.-born Graduate Student, public research university, New England) said that he knew of “some [international students]” who had financial difficulties but could not say that about the majority. Other stakeholder respondents said that it depended on who students were. One of them said that “from what [he] heard, it varie[d] depending on the student’s family’s financial situation” (Caleb, 29 y/o, Sales Manager at a For-Profit organization, New England). Adel (52 y/o, an International Student Advisor and a Designated School Official (public research university, Northeast-Mid-Atlantic), who mostly dealt with immigration-related issues when working with international students, provided a more elaborate explanation:

*I have been in this field for a long time. I feel that in the past, more students struggled to make ends meet while studying. It seems to me that since the vast majority of international students in the U.S. are now Chinese, with new Chinese prosperity, the "majority" of our students do not struggle financially. But, setting the Chinese aside, I believe that still, many-many students and their families struggle to financially pay for their studies. Many students don't know if they'll be able to make it to the end of their degree, financially speaking.*
In a similar fashion, another stakeholder admitted that “for [her] students, it varie[d] – some [had] expressed concern about this [financial insecurity] but others receive[d] plenty of support from their families” (Ronda, 31 y/o, International Student Advisor, private research university, New England).

**International students do not have financial difficulties.** Only one respondent (4.5%), Abby (28 y/o), an International Student Pathway Program Advisor who worked at a private research university based in New England, stated with utmost confidence that international students did not struggle financially based on her experience and direct conversations with students.

**Other.** One participant (4.5%), Kevin (30 y/o), the Co-Founder of a For-Profit Business providing external services to international students and based in New England, said that it was “hard for [him] to tell because [Kevin] tend[ed] to see international students who c[a]me from wealthier families.” Finally, two stakeholder participants (9%), Bob (31 y/o, International Student Admissions Counselor and Advisor, private music-focused HEI, New England) and Dee (44 y/o, private technology-focused HEI, New England) did not know whether international students struggled financially because they never had money-related conversations with their students. See Table 12 below for the summary of condensed responses of stakeholder participants to the question about whether they thought that many international students struggled financially based on their personal conversations with international students.
Table 12

Stakeholder Participants: Do Many International Students Struggle Financially?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Varies</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>18%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inclusion/exclusion of international students in the U.S. society. An operational definition of social inclusion for this study related to a positive outcome of policies that assert human dignity above politics, while social exclusion was seen a negative outcome stemming from regulations that did not address individual needs and were not built on the principles of empathy and human dignity. Empirical data presented in the earlier Findings section about the student participants, revealed that the vast majority of student respondents (over 66%) identified having felt excluded in the U.S. society to at least some extent, whereas 29% felt fully included.

Similarly, most stakeholder respondents (68%) said that they did not think that international students felt fully included in the United States; 18% stated that the level of international students’ inclusion mainly depended on their school’s location, while 14% felt like international students were fully included in the U.S. society.

Excluded. A variety of reasons were mentioned, such as the U.S. political climate, employment restrictions, temporality of nonimmigrant status, ethnic discrimination, individual characteristics, cultural differences, lack of interaction with domestic students, lack of empathy from the U.S. community members, pressure from family, as well as pressure to succeed.

U.S. political climate. In our conversations about international students’ feeling of exclusion, such key words as fear, lack of safety, and hostility came up from those
stakeholders who identified the U.S. political climate as being the most significant contributing factor to F-1 students’ feeling of exclusion. “Given the current climate in the States, I think many of [international students] are fearful and do not feel welcome or safe,” said Eva (35 y/o), an International Student Services Specialist at a private research university based in the South Atlantic region. Similarly, Libby (23 y/o), an International Student Programming Specialist at a public and, and as she emphasized a “predominately white” research university located in the Midwest-East North Central region, echoed that statement:

*The current administration has policies that are hostile and xenophobic; international students face hate [and] bias incidents.*

And Dee (44 y/o, International Student Advisor, private technology-focused university, New England) also related international students’ feeling of exclusion to the political situation in the country. Dee stated that “politics [wa]s the number one reason” international students felt excluded in the United States. “Unfortunately, there is only so much we can control on campus,” she concluded.

*Employment restrictions.* Closely related to the political climate and immigration policies it promoted, another contributing to international students’ feeling of exclusion, was the one related to employment restrictions imposed on F-1 holders. For example, Sandra (45 y/o, International Student Advisor, public community college, New England) shared with me what she had heard from her students who felt excluded primarily because of the restrictive employment-related immigration policies:

*I have had a couple conversations with international students, and some of them don’t feel fully integrated in the U.S. society because they have so many restrictions for employment ..., or some employers are not interested to learn about other cultures or the process to hire an international student.*
Nonimmigrant status and its temporary nature. In addition to the employment restrictions that stemmed out of international students’ nonimmigrant status, the whole idea of being “temporary” did not exactly promote the feeling of stability and peace. Adel (52 y/o, International Student Advisor, public research university, Northeast-Mid-Atlantic) elaborated on this notion of temporariness, and how, in her mind, it played a major role in international students’ inability to develop the feeling of inclusion:

[International students do not feel included]..., not at all. Partly, we shouldn't expect this. They are somewhat isolated in the academic world, and it is not a very realistic thing to think they have the time, desire, or exposure to involve themselves in U.S. society at large. Furthermore, they are not citizens, and most don't have family here and do not share the culture of the U.S., all things that help one integrate into society. I think it's normal for anyone in a temporary situation to not feel settled or to not fully commit to their surroundings.

Adel added, however, that despite F-1 students’ nonimmigrant status, and despite there being “many reasons” for why international students “d[id]n’t feel fully included in society,” many international students were still able to “fully engage on campus and with the academic society where they live[d].”

In a similar fashion, Lenny (46 y/o, International Student Advisor, community college, New England) spoke out about how international students were deprived of their capacity to fully engage in the life of their host community due to their nonimmigrant status and therefore being labeled as such, temporary residents. “I believe that a majority of international students feel as a subgroup of U.S. society,” said Lenny. “It all starts when the U.S. removes their cultural identity and labels them all ‘international students’,,” he concluded.

Ethnic discrimination. An ethnic component was yet another factor that was tied to the public’s negative attitudes towards foreigners, considering how often it was being
promulgated and reinforced by the main actors of political power in the United States, according to some stakeholder respondents. “Not looking like the average student” was definitely something that raised concerns for Libby (23 y/o, International Student Programming Specialist, public research university, Midwest-East North Central). “I think [international students] face discrimination based on … the way they look,” said Libby.

Yomar (45 y/o, Dean of International Student Affairs, private liberal arts college, Midwest-East North Central) expanded on the topic of international students’ ethnic characteristics affecting social attitudes towards them. In addition, Yomar noted that some might be more affected that others. He elaborated:

*It often depends on how much they stick out. European international students often face less issues [of] being included because they don’t always stick out until they open their mouths and sometime have an accent. Also, U.S. mainstream culture is more familiar with their [European international students’] culture and has some similarities, so it helps with their ability to find inclusive environments.*

*Individual characteristics.* The theme of looking like or being like an “average” or “normal” student developed, with several respondents mentioning how it really “depend[ed]” on individual students. For example, Jusamby (50 y/o), a Therapist and Professor who worked at a private all-women’s university in New England, shared her professional opinion on how the entire notion of being perceived as “normal” played a role in international students’ feeling of inclusion or otherwise exclusion. Jusamby clarified:

*Socially, there are certain groups that are considered ‘normal’ international students, and others are often left to their own devices. Some feel dislocated in U.S society and struggle to make the transition of finding a group or identity.*

Jusamby also noted that she “d[fd]nt’ think” that “colleges [we]re particularly adept at supporting nuanced identities,” which was a major area of concern for her.
In the same vein, Jason (42 y/o), a College Counselor and an Academic Advisor for Chinese Students who worked at a boarding high school based in the Midwest-East North Central region of the United States, attested to the idea that some international students managed to find their “way into the community,” while other students struggled with that. Jason expanded on his viewpoint:

*It depends on the student or their particular situation. I have seen students who have become a fixture at their school, and I have seen students completely isolated from their school culture. Each situation is individual.*

*Cultural differences.* The cultural aspect was another barrier contributing to international students’ feeling of exclusion. Some thought that because international students’ cultures were so different from the one in the United States, a feeling of exclusion was just a natural outcome. Ximena (37 y/o), an ESL Instructor at a private liberal arts college in New England, said that “there [would] always be a part of them [international students] that [would remain being] a part of their home and culture.” In a like manner, Jambo (46 y/o, Fellow Graduate Student from Sierra Leone/ green card holder who had never been in an F-1 status, public university, New England) shared his own experience of being excluded from the mainstream society due to his home culture, and how he had to adjust his way of enjoying life to the fullest, in order to comply with the views of the majority. “Do international students feel included? Not really … because of the cultural differences,” Jambo stated. He shared his story:

*Here is my experience. For example, using perfume in Africa is ok, but in the United States, it’s a restriction. My supervisor had a conversation with me about it. I said, ‘I value perfumes, so why do you prohibit me to follow my tradition?’ A lot of people in America don’t understand the perfume culture, so now, I am excluded from exercising my tradition. But you have to go with it.*
As Jambo proceeded with his story, he delivered a powerful message. He said: “U.S. culture took over my culture. Now, you have to align with THEIR requirement!” Jambo specified that those were “cultural requirements, not legal ones” and that it would take “somebody analytical to look at it from a broader sense.” Jambo felt that the feeling of one’s inclusion was deeply rooted in one’s culture, and when international students’ culture was not largely accepted in the United States, and when they were forced to give up their culture in order to blend in, this is when the issue of exclusion emerged. Jambo elaborated:

*It’s all about the culture. I’m targeted as an African, I am reminded that I have to conform to this way of living here in the U.S. On top of that, the person who had a conversation with me about perfume, also reminded me to not forget about it after I got back from my home country when I went to visit for vacation.*

*Lack of interaction with domestic students.* On a different spectrum of cultural differences presented as a barrier to international students’ feeling of inclusion, was the angle where stakeholder participants blamed international students themselves for not doing enough to overcome that very barrier. For example, Caleb (29 y/o, Sales Manager, For-Profit organization, New England) thought that F-1 students “often tend[ed] to associate with other international students and d[id] not often assimilate into the U.S. culture [for that reason].” Rogelio (34 y/o, Fellow U.S.-born Graduate Student, public research university, New England) echoed Caleb by saying that international students tended to mostly interact with students from the same culture. Rogelio also shared an interesting perspective by comparing international students who were coming to live in the United States for a limited amount of time, to immigrants who were coming to the country for permanent residence:

*[International students don’t feel fully included]. I don’t think so. No. Because I would say that they come here for a temporary amount of time, whereas you have other immigrant populations ..., now, they tend to congregate to the same neighborhoods. International students come here and live near or on campus, they don’t have an established foundation, so they tend to stick with folks of same*
nationality as them. So, it is what it is. Not enough community support, they feel like they can’t relate. Culture shock would make anyone naturally to not feel included. Never mind that they are in college. College kids in general are always trying to find themselves, now imagine going through that phase and being in a different country!

The flip side of the interpretive angle where international students’ lack of interaction with domestic students resulted in their feeling of exclusion, was the one where international students were not necessarily seen as being “at fault” for not interacting enough with domestic students. Ronda (31 y/o, International Student Advisor, private research university, New England) admitted that in her case, international students did not even have the opportunity to interact with domestic students. Ronda explained:

In the program I work with, the international student majority is so large that students have very few opportunities to interact with domestic students. They have classes together, study together, and often live together, so they are frequently unable to practice communicating in English with native speakers and to get exposed to U.S. culture.

From that angle, international students felt generally excluded from the mainstream society simply because they did not have the capacity to interact with domestic students because there were just too many international students on campus. Therefore, cases where entire programs were dominated by international students, would provide for little to no opportunity to interact with domestic students.

Lack of empathy from the U.S. community members. Lack of empathy and understanding of international students’ cultures was explained by one stakeholder as being a result of American people’s complete absence or insufficient extent of exposure to the outside world. “A lot of people in the United States haven’t gone through what [international students] have …. There is a lack of empathy for them [because of that],” said Dee (44 y/o, International Student Advisor, private technology-focused university, New England), who
was born in the United States but had lived in several countries for extended periods of time throughout her life.

Other. In addition to all of the factors contributing to international students’ feeling of exclusion mentioned above, the following additional barriers were identified by Dee (44 y/o, International Student Advisor, private technology-focused university, New England):

“pressure from family,” “pressure to succeed,” and “not wanting to be a burden,” all contributing to their feeling of isolation and insecurity. Dee was concerned with international students’ deteriorating mental health that resulted from those obstacles, thus fostering their feeling of exclusion. Dee explained her viewpoint:

*Mental health is a serious issue that arises from all of the obstacles international students go through .... They simply can't deal with all those massive amounts of pressure put upon them ... and can't deal with a lot of obstacles set in front of them.*

To top it off, Dee thought that some students continued feeling excluded even upon their return to their home countries. She elaborated:

*Even when students come back to their home countries ..., take Chinese students, for example, ... have you ever heard of the term ‘Sea Turtles’? ... Those ... are in-between students from China. They study in the U.S., then come back home, and they are now separate from everyone else .... It’s a continuous struggle ..., and it continues even after their departure from the U.S.*

**Depends on the school.** Four stakeholders (18%) stated that the feeling of international F-1 students’ inclusion depended on the school or its location. Lola (39 y/o), an Academic Advisor to International Students who worked at a public research university in the Midwest-East North Central region, shared her personal experience of working at two different schools, where international students had completely different experiences in relation to inclusion:

*It depends on the school and location. [At] my current place of employment, I would say, no [international students do not feel included]. International students are few in
number, and as a result, it makes it challenging to inform a predominately white school [attendees] about a different group of people [existing on campus]. [At] my prior place of employment, [however], I would say yes [international students were in a good place]. The school had a Family Mentor Program, in which I participated. Students that were my mentees and their friends shared their positives and inclusive experiences with me.

Vivien (50 y/o), an International Student and Scholar Advisor who was now working at a medium-size public university in New England, also attributed the type of school to be the determining factor in shaping international students’ feeling of inclusion within their host community. Vivien elaborated:

[International students do] not [always feel] so fully included for various reasons ..., on different campuses ... for example, when I was working at a community college, I [saw] more inclusion and participation due to [it being a] smaller school and [having a] tighter community.

Some stakeholders focused more on a school’s location rather than its size and demographics. For example, Abby (28 y/o, International Student Pathway Program Advisor, private research university, New England) was under the impression that international students whose schools were located in the metropolitan areas, had an advantage over those whose campuses were far removed from the city:

Being in [Large Metropolitan City in New England], I think students feel more a part of the city compared to students in more rural locations, outside of a major metropolitan area. The diversity in [Large Metropolitan City in New England], helps students feel like they belong.

Ximena (37 y/o), an ESL Instructor who worked at a private liberal arts college in New England, also added a broader definition of what a “school location” meant to her by expanding its definition from the aforementioned “metropolitan vs rural” characteristic to the one based on a geographic region within the States:

Some areas of the United States are more accepting of international students and foreign-born individuals in general than others.
Ultimately, Ximena concluded that “location d[id] play a huge factor” in whether international students felt more or less included while living the U.S.

**Fully included.** Three respondents (14%) thought that international students felt fully included in the United States. “Yeah, no one is harassing them. A lot of people welcome non-native speakers,” said Sophia (33 y/o), an HR Director at private New-England-based ESL School, former International Student Advisor and a DSO, as well as a former international student from Ukraine. Another former international student from Bulgaria, Fiona (37 y/o) who know worked as an International Students and Scholars Advisor at a public research university in the South Atlantic region, mentioned that “[she] h[ad] s[een] a lot of improvements since [her] own time as an international student a decade ago.” Fiona added:

*I think universities and international student offices are doing more, in terms of programming focused on assimilation, workshops with important employment information, and more.*

A positive outlook on the issue of inclusion/exclusion of international F-1 students was also shared by Bob (31 y/o, higher-generation American, International Student Admissions Counselor and Advisor, private music-focused HEI, New England), who felt that his students felt more included once they got to the United States, as compared to the feeling they may have had been experiencing prior to the arrival:

*I've found students are suspicious of how they'll be included prior to arrival and learn after they get started that things are different from their expectations. I think they end up feeling more included than they think they are going to.*

**Summary.** Ultimately, most stakeholder respondents thought that international students felt excluded in the U.S. society, having identified a number of factors that contributed to their feeling of exclusion. Those factors included current political climate, employment restrictions, temporary status, ethnic discrimination, individual situations,
cultural differences, lack of interaction with domestic students, lack of empathy from the U.S. community members, pressure from family, pressure to succeed, as well as school type and location. See Figure 8 in Appendix F for the ‘Spiderweb of Exclusion’ visual summary of the factors contributing to international students’ exclusion.

**To Stay or Not to Stay: That is the Question**

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how employment policies might be affecting international students’ socio-economic well-being, I wanted to learn whether international students’ desire to stay in the United States upon the expiration of their F-1 status, had something to do with it. Empirical data presented in the earlier Findings section on student participants’ experiences, showed that 61% of the student sample, did not want to leave the United States, which almost definitively played a role in their reported struggles with restrictive policies. Since I wanted to look at the same issue from a different angle, I asked my stakeholder participants whether they had encountered students who had admitted to them in person that they wanted to stay in the United States upon graduation.

As a result, 45% of the stakeholder respondents said that many international students wanted to stay in the United States based on their experiences; 32% admitted that some students wanted to stay in the United States, and some did not, whereas five respondents (23%) stated that they had never heard directly from international students that they wanted to stay in the United States. See Table 13 below for the visual summary of the stakeholder responses.
Table 13

Stakeholder Participants: Do Many F-1 Students Want to Stay in the United States?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Never heard</th>
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<td>45%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many want to stay. Out of the ten stakeholder participants who stated that many international students wanted to stay in the United States, six said that, in fact, the vast majority of F-1 students they interacted with had expressed a desire to immigrate to the United States. For example, Libby (23 y/o, International Student Programming Specialist, public research university, Midwest-East North Central) said that “the majority of students [she] talked to would choose to stay in the United States if they had the option.” “Many students come with hopes and dreams of the United States and want to build a life here,” echoed Lenny (46 y/o, International Student Advisor, community college, New England). “Yes [many international students want to stay in the United States], but they know it is going to be difficult,” admitted Kevin (30 y/o, Co-founder of the For-profit Business primarily serving international students, New England).

Adel (52 y/o), an International Student Advisor at a public research university based in the Mid-Atlantic region of the Northeast, admitted that based on her extensive experience, “many students want[ed] to stay in the U.S. after their studies.” She also stated that some international students would even resort to extreme measures to achieve their goal of immigrating to the United States. Adel provided some examples:

*I’ve known some students that only get an F-1 visa so they can find an American spouse, get permanent residency, and quit school. I knew some that were willing to join the U.S. military just to stay in the U.S. I’ve known others who pay their way to a green card by investing in business in the U.S. through the E-2 visa .... [I’ve known]*
others who kept enrolling in new programs of study for ten to 15 years while their 
permanent residency petition processed.

Adel also mentioned that throughout many years of having had worked with international 
students, she had learned not to generalize whether students from certain country were 
potential migrants or not. She elaborated:

_Sometimes there are general tendencies by country, sometimes not. For example, 
almost all Indian students I work with desire to remain in the U.S. Almost all Saudi 
Arabian students desire, or are mandated, to return home. Generalities are just that 
though, because I've known Saudis who have stayed and Indians who have gone 
home, but they are definitely rare._

Ultimately, according to Adel, “there [wa]s a great desire to remain” identified by many of 
her international students.

According to some stakeholder respondents, many international students also openly 
expressed their desire to extend their F-1 status in order to gain the opportunity to stay longer 
in the country, not necessarily for immigration purposes. For example, Lola (39 y/o), an 
Academic Advisor to International Students who currently worked at a public research 
university in the Midwest-East North Central region, but who had worked at several 
community colleges in the past, stated that the majority of her students sought to extend their 
nonimmigrant status:

_I have worked at two-year colleges. Therefore, I got asked frequently ‘what can I do 
to continue my education in the United States, so I can stay longer?’_

Similarly, Ronda (31 y/o, International Student Advisor, private research university, New 
England) stated that in her experience, “most [international students] want[ed] to stay 
through the time their OPT allow[ed].”

_Some want to stay, some do not._ Thirty-two percent of the stakeholder participants 
did not think that most international students wanted to stay in the United States, however
they knew of some students who definitely wanted to stay and of others who, on the contrary, were determined to go back home upon the completion of their programs. Rogelio (34 y/o, Fellow U.S.-born Graduate Student, public research university, New England) attested to that:

_Not a lot [of international students want to stay in the U.S.]. Some of them get sick and tired of being here, of how difficult it is here. It’s a loaded question cause I’ve seen both. Typically, the ones that want to stay here are not necessarily wealthy. I know it’s a generalization, but I don’t think I’m too far off. Those who want to go back, they are already wealthy and have something already there for them._

Abby (28 y/o, International Student Pathway Program Advisor, private research university in New England) echoed Rogelio on the notion by stating that, for the most part, only those international students who had “their career path mapped out for them back home” were determined to go back. “A lot of students have family businesses or specific companies at home they plan to work at after their program,” Adel clarified. While some international students definitely wanted to stay in the United States, others wanted to go back also because they had “close family ties back home” and were not willing to sacrifice that by staying in the United States.

Yomar (45 y/o, Dean of International Student Affairs, private liberal arts college, Midwest-East North Central) said that in his experience of interacting with international students, many wanted to stay “in the short-term” but would generally want to go back to their home countries after a while. Yomar elaborated:

_In the short term yes, long term many hope to go home. Many of the countries where they come from require connections to get good jobs. U.S. degrees help but are often not enough. Going back home after having worked in the U.S. makes for better prospects and substitutes the lack of family connections to obtain desirable jobs._

Similarly, Jusamby (50 y/o, Therapist/Professor, private all-women’s university, New England) shared that international students’ decision to stay in the United States was directly
related to timing. In her professional opinion, their decision formed and “changed throughout [F-1 students’] college times,” which was their “developmental identity period.” Jusamby elaborated on why some international students were choosing to stay, while others decided to go back home throughout their time in college:

*Some students become very angry with their families in the financial struggle that occurs and the emotional process of individuation and want to stay. Others become angry with the lack of support from the college itself and want to leave as soon as they have their degrees.*

Finally, according to Sandra (45 y/o, International Student Advisor, public community college, New England), sometimes those international students who simply wanted to prolong their stay in the country “to pursue a higher degree in the U.S.,” did not end up doing it because education was “too expensive.”

**Other.** Three stakeholder participants did not think that many international students wanted to move to the United States, however those were just their assumptions, as they had never had any of their students actually tell them whether they wanted to stay upon graduation or not. Two respondents admitted that they did not know whether many international students wanted to stay in the United States and did not want to make any assumptions. Ultimately, five respondents (23%) never heard directly from international students whether they wanted to stay in the United States.

Ultimately, according to the interviewed stakeholders, many international students wanted to stay in the United States despite their acknowledgment of all the difficulties they might encounter in the process, and those F-1 students who did not intend to stay in the country, often had much more to gain than lose by going back home.
Qualitative Data Analysis Summary

**Working with international students: reasons and attitudes.** Out of the 22 (100%) stakeholder participants, 73% assumed their current roles in which they closely interacted with international students, willfully, either as a result of their pursuit of a career in international education or as a consequence of their past experiences, such as travel abroad. Whereas 23% of the sample admitted to having undertaken their roles unintentionally.

Data showed that stakeholder’s personal backgrounds and identities played a big role in how they described their attitudes towards international students. First-generation immigrants, first-generation Americans, former international students and those who had studied or worked abroad in the past, thought that their identities had led them to feeling more compassionate and understanding of international students. Whereas, higher-generation, and mostly white, American stakeholder respondents, put a bigger emphasis on the need to be continuously aware of their white privilege when speaking of how their identities might be influencing their interactions with international students.

**Why international students want to study in the United States.** The most common driving factors identified by stakeholder participants included better opportunities, quality and prestige of the U.S. higher education, as well as a gateway into the country. Additional reasons mentioned by the respondents were: American dream, family expectation, way to escape, globalization, marketing force of U.S. colleges, seeking challenge, experiencing U.S. culture, and learning English.

**Biggest challenges related to working and interacting with international students.** Current political situation in the United States aligned with restrictive immigration policies for F-1 students, employment-related issues, as well as ethical dilemmas were
identified as the biggest challenges of working with international students. Amongst other difficulties were inequalities in opportunities, the feeling of entitlement, institutional policies, financial difficulties, language barriers, cultural differences, academic integrity, and lack of professional knowledge to be able to serve international students in a more efficient way. From a broad perspective, however, the main theme that came out of the conversations about stakeholders’ work-related struggles, was their overwhelming frustration with being unable to change anything due to external factors they had no control over.

**Views on current F-1 employment-related immigration policies.** Most stakeholders thought that current employment-related immigration policies were unfair, stating that international students should be able to get a job over less qualified American workers and that opening international students’ access into the workforce would only boost the U.S. economy and allow the country to be more competitive in the global race for talent.

Suggestive revisions to the current policies included allowing international students to work off campus without any restrictions, bringing down the cost for small businesses to sponsor international students, extending OPT duration periods for all majors, not just for STEM, creating tangible pathways towards employment opportunities to all international student graduates of U.S. universities, increasing the number of H-1B slots, as well as building a two year work requirement into the F visa regulations while international students are in school and, similarly, a two year post-degree work requirement for every student in every degree. On the other hand, it was suggested that CPT and OPT programs were to be eliminated altogether. Several respondents thought that the policies were fair however, explaining that current regulations were in place to protect the country and its economy.
International students’ experiences in a workplace. With regard to international students’ unfair treatment in a workplace, half of the respondents had heard of negative experiences directly shared with them by students. Those stories included incidents of international students not being paid for what they were supposed to, being underpaid or paid less than their U.S. counterparts, being overworked or doing extra tasks that they were not responsible for, working under the table, experiencing sexual harassment, feeling excluded from certain work activities, not being given equal access to information about their rights as employees, having impatient supervisors, being fired without notice for taking sick days, being denied a job due to their nonimmigrant status and all the complexities that came with it, being promised H-1B sponsorship and eventually never receiving it, as well as being denied an H-1B visa sponsorship due to complexity or lack of knowledge on how to do it. The other half had never heard of any mistreatment experiences in a workplace, neither directly from international students, nor indirectly.

Impact of employment-related immigration policies on F-1 international students’ socio-economic well-being. Seventy-seven percent felt that current employment-related immigration policies directly affected international students’ socio-economic well-being, contributing to their financial or emotional struggles that stemmed from their inability to work for any employer and for more hours than outlined within the law.

Deliberately constructed by the U.S. government to prevent immigration, employment policies forced financially insecure international students to work under the table, share housing with multiple people in order to save money, and generally struggle to survive.
The degree of F-1 students’ financial struggle. Eighty-two percent admitted that at least some international students were definitely struggling financially. Coming to the United States for quality education and better job opportunities, many (according to 46%) or some (according to 32%) international students wanted to stay in the United States despite their acknowledgment of all the difficulties they might encounter in the process. About seventy-seven percent of the respondents thought that current employment-related immigration policies for F-1 students were too restrictive and assigned them the following characteristics: depriving of financial autonomy, violating rights, too complicated, unfair, lacking in flexibility, abetting exploitation, and disadvantaging to the U.S. economy.

Inclusion/exclusion of international student in the U.S. society. Eighty-six percent of the respondents determined that international students felt excluded in the United States in one way or another, contributing factors being current political climate, employment restrictions, temporary status, lack of empathy from the U.S. community members, ethnic discrimination, cultural differences, lack of interaction with domestic students, pressure from family, and school type or location. Only 14% thought that international students felt fully included in the U.S. society.

To stay or not to stay: that is the question. Forty-five percent of the stakeholder respondents said that many international students wanted to stay in the United States based on their experiences; 32% admitted that some students wanted to stay in the United States, and some did not, whereas five respondents (23%) stated that they had never heard directly from international students that they wanted to stay in the United States.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to learn about international F-1 students’ socio-economic well-being in the face of employment-related U.S. immigration policies. The following six major themes emerged from the study: Dissatisfaction with current policies of both student participants (96%) and stakeholder respondents (82%); Negative impact of such policies on international students’ socio-economic well-being from the perspective of both students (76%) and stakeholders (77%); Biggest challenges of international F-1 students being related to financial insecurity, identified by 50% of the student respondents and by 64% of the stakeholders; International F-1 students feeling excluded in the U.S. society (66% of student participants) and as perceived by 86% of the stakeholder respondents; The issue of unauthorized labor and vulnerability it fostered, as identified by 60.5% of student participants who either worked under-the-table or else undertook CPTs and OPTs unrelated to their fields of study, and International students’ resilience and action-focused coping strategies in the face of restrictive employment regulations.

These themes were also in line with the findings from the policy analysis, which identified immigration laws’ misalignment with international human rights standards and their negative impact on international students’ feeling of inclusion.

Beyond the six dominating themes described above, there were other issues addressed in the findings that were directly related to the main themes’ development. For example,
influencing factors driving student participants’ decision to study in the United States, and in many cases to stay in the country, as well as their pre-departure expectations often had a direct tie to the negative experiences that were shaped in the face of U.S. employment-related immigration policies, which, resulted in predominant dissatisfaction with those regulations. Similarly, student participants’ stories on their experiences in a workplace, which included rational for seeking employment, the timeframe of realization, nature and scope of jobs undertaken by students, as well as their employer treatment, all were directly connected to the themes of exclusion, financial insecurity, and unauthorized labor. Furthermore, conversations about the effect employment regulations had on student participants’ socio-economic well-being, produced suggestions on what could be improved or changed within current U.S. immigration policies. Finally, our discussions with the student participants about the meanings they assigned to the concept of work had an enormous contribution to the themes of resilience in the face of employment restrictions.

With regard to the stakeholders, discussions about the reasons that had led them to work with international students and how their identities influenced their perceptions of international students’ issues, were instrumental in developing the themes of exclusion and dissatisfaction with current immigration policies. In addition, when stakeholder respondents shared their first-hand knowledge about international students’ experiences in the workplace, those stories had a direct correlation to the themes of unauthorized labor and financial insecurity. In our conversations about the biggest challenges of working or interacting with international students, the topics of negative socio-economic well-being and suggestive revisions for immigration policies emerged. Finally, the topics of international students’
financial struggles and pursuit of economic mobility, fortified the theme of international students’ resilience in the face of restrictive immigration regulations.

The study was conducted in the frame of human rights, specifically international students’ rights to employment and personal development. Empirical data showed that current employment-related U.S. immigration policies denied international F-1 students access to freely exercise those rights, making them feel vulnerable or else forcing them to create innovative approaches to overcome those barriers, such as engaging in unauthorized work and finding legal loopholes within the law.

I hereby organize the chapter by the main themes and correlated subthemes that contributed to their development. I end the chapter with the study’s implications and recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

**Dissatisfaction with Current Policies**

**Students.** Ninety-two percent of student respondents expressed dissatisfaction with current work-related policies outlined by the U.S. government for F-1 students and claimed their frustration with the fact that they were being deprived of freedom to work off campus without having to seek an employment authorization from their schools and ultimately, the USCIS, a process that in itself was tedious and ineffective. Themes of human rights violations, inequality, and inadequacy of on-campus as well as off-campus practical training work regulations in relation to the actual needs of international students came up during our conversations. Students were also concerned with the fact that current policies were yielding to other countries in the global race for talent, discouraging skilled migration, and increasing fraud.
According to student participants, current policies were a product of wrongful assumptions on behalf of the U.S. government and concerned citizens about international students, such as: stealing jobs of U.S. workers, being wealthy and thus not needing to work, being disguised as economic migrants and thus being perceived as criminals, among others.

**Suggestions on what can be changed.** The vast majority of student respondents dissatisfied with current policies, stated that if given the power to implement change, they would definitely remove all employment-related restrictions and allow F-1 students to work freely in the United States, for as many hours and for any employer as they pleased. Additional suggestions included eliminating CPT, prolonging OPT and removing its field-of-study-relation condition, allowing international students to take out loans in the United States, lowering their tuition, increasing H-1B cap or eliminating it altogether, and creating more work-programs for international students with individual needs.

**Influencing factors driving student participants’ decision to study in the United States.** Since 24% of student participants did not enter the United States on an F-1 visa, having had eventually adjusted their nonimmigrant status to F-1, it was clear that pursuing a degree was not their primary goal. The vast majority of the rest of the student sample (76%) who had originally entered the United States on an F-1 visa, similarly, did not identify education as their primary reason for coming to the United States. For many, their primary motivations were socio-economic mobility, pursuit of freedom, and a way of escaping political crisis at home.

**Pre-departure expectations and reality.** For the vast majority of student respondents (79%), experience of being an international F-1 student in the United States did not meet their pre-departure expectations. Thirteen student respondents (34%) felt that their lived
experiences were entirely opposite from what they had originally expected. Six (16%) participants said that at least one aspect of their experience came as a complete surprise. Another set of participants, four (10.5%), identified that their F-1 ventures failed to meet their original anticipations, in the sense that they had originally thought that life in the United States was going to be more difficult than it had turned out to be. In contrast, seven respondents (18.5%) admitted to having had lower pre-departure expectations compared to what their experiences in the United States had actually played out to be.

**Stakeholders.** Most stakeholder participants (77.5%) thought that current immigration policies related to F-1 students’ employment rights were too restrictive. Most of the stakeholder participants who were advocating for change, i.e. revisiting the policies and making them more inclusive of international students’ needs, were first-generation immigrants. The following characteristics were assigned to the current policies: depriving financial autonomy, violating rights, complicated, unfair, lacking flexibility, abetting exploitation, and disadvantaging the U.S. economy.

**Suggestions on what can be changed.** Suggestive revisions to the current policies included allowing international students to work off campus without any restrictions, bringing down the cost for small businesses to sponsor international students, extending OPT duration periods for all majors, not just for STEM, creating tangible pathways towards employment opportunities to all international student graduates of U.S. universities, increasing the number of H-1B slots, as well as building a two year work requirement into the F visa regulations while international students are in school and a two year post-degree work requirement for every student in every degree.
Negative Impact of Employment-Related Immigration Policies on International F-1 Students’ Socio-Economic Well-Being

Students. Seventy-six percent of student participants reported having had been impacted by the restrictive employment regulations in a negative way. Many of them had to lower their living standards due to financial constraints, such as having to share a living space with several people, living on credit cards, and having to look for free clothing at the Goodwill. Many lived in fear of making a mistake, such as getting into a fight to defend a girlfriend or being found working where they were not supposed and as a result, being deported.

Some had to switch their focus on working rather than studying to support their economic well-being, which negatively impacted their academic progress. A lot of student respondents were frustrated with inequalities current employment regulations fostered, where they felt like second-class citizens with no rights or opportunities to grow, both personally and professionally. Some students had to go against their moral values due to the restrictive work regulations, such as having to lie on job applications about their nonimmigrant status, marrying someone they were not sure about to be able to work to only find themselves stuck in an abusive relationship, and having to continue relying on their families for financial support despite being emotionally troubled by the fact they could not be independent.

Biggest challenges encountered by students during their F-1 journeys. For 50% of the student respondents, the most difficult part of their journeys was related to financial insecurity and numerous work restrictions; 26.5% struggled with linguistic and cultural barriers; 10.5% found lack of pathways towards permanent residency to be the most frustrating part, while the rest also identified such challenges as homesickness, loneliness and
troubles navigating the U.S. education system. Ultimately, all of those barriers negatively impacted their socio-economic well-being, resulting in stress, depression, and anxiety.

**Stakeholders.** Most stakeholder respondents (77%) thought that current employment-related immigration policies outlined within the federal regulations for nonimmigrant F-1 students, definitely affected their socio-economic well-being in a negative way. Being unreasonably restrictive and thus, not only contributing to international students’ financial struggles, but also leading to their exclusion from full and equal engagement in the life of the U.S. community, such policies undeniably heightened F-1 students’ feeling of socio-economic insecurity, according to most stakeholder respondents.

Immigration policies related to F-1 students’ ability to gain employment in the United States in general, were seen as inadequate by those stakeholders whose main concern was with international students’ limited ability to gain U.S. work experience, regardless of whether they wanted to stay in the United States or not. Their main argument was that international students needed better opportunities, including having more lenient employment-related immigration policies in place, as well as being able to grow their experience in order to succeed in their future careers.

Several stakeholders emphasized how difficult it was to obtain a job after graduation due to such factors as not being able to secure OPT on time, restrictive OPT policies affecting the type of companies or jobs international students could apply for, and OPT policies being incompatible with a gig economy.

**Biggest challenges of working and interacting with international students.** The most common challenges in working and interacting with international students identified by stakeholder participants involved: current political situation in the United States aligned with
its restrictive immigration policies for F-1 students, employment-related issues, as well as ethical dilemmas. Other challenges identified by the respondents included inequalities in opportunities, the feeling of entitlement, institutional policies, financial difficulties, language barriers, cultural differences, academic integrity, and lack of professional knowledge to be able to serve international students in a more efficient way.

The ultimate conclusion that I drew based on the empirical data obtained from the stakeholder participants, was that in a bigger picture, most of the challenges identified by the respondents, had, in fact, developed from their inability to change anything due to the external factors. A continuous theme of “there is only so much you can do” flowing throughout my conversations with the stakeholders, was, by far, a dominant one.

**Financial Insecurity**

**Students.** Financial struggles were the most common ones mentioned by the student respondents. Due to restrictive employment-related immigration policies, many were forced into the underground economy and lived in fear of getting caught. Most of the students who did not work illegally, however, identified significant challenges with finding legal employment, having experienced discrimination based on their nonimmigrant status and limited capacity for accepting long-term job offers. Financial insecurity emerged from different angles: some students blamed astronomical tuition fees, some could not afford unexpectedly high rent, and others simply did not have any support from their families, so they had to find work in order to survive. Many student participants blamed the U.S. immigration system that restricted their right to work for having had caused their continuous financial insecurity, while some admitted that they simply underestimated how expensive life in the United States was going to be and blamed themselves.
Rationalizing F-1 students’ pursuit of employment. Over 50% of student respondents identified financial need as being their main driver for seeking employment in the United States. Related key terms included: survival, numerous expenses, high tuition costs, pocket money, high rent, unexpected medical bills, being cut off by parents, seeking financial independence, needing money to feed their family, and saving for school.

Job necessity: the timeframe of realization. The timeframe of realization that one needed to work was divided equally between student respondents into those who wanted to work from day one and those for whom the realization came later: for example, when they encountered an unexpected financial circumstance.

Stakeholders. The theme of financial struggles resulting from current employment policies was a recurrent one. It became clear from my conversations with the stakeholders, that it was a particular challenge for those international students who did not come from wealthy families to maintain a good quality of life while studying in the United States. Sixty-eight percent of the stakeholder participants stated that international students should be able to get a job over less qualified American workers, which would not only boost the U.S. economy and allow the country to be more competitive in the global race for talent but would also allow international students to exercise autonomy and eliminate their unnecessary financial struggles.

Degree of F-1 students’ financial struggles. Most stakeholder respondents (82%) thought that international students were struggling financially at least to some extent. Reasons leading to F-1 students’ financial insecurity included: work restrictions, high tuition, sudden loss of financial support, and home currency fluctuations. Ultimately, if international
students’ families did not come from money, they most definitely had some degree of financial hurdles, according to stakeholder respondents.

**Exclusion**

**Students.** Over 66% of the student respondents reported feeling excluded in the United States, at least to some extent, for such reasons as being barred from full participation in the labor market, having to carry a foreigner label, and struggling with cultural differences.

**Stakeholders.** Sixty-eight percent of stakeholder respondents said that they did not think that international students felt fully included in the United States. Whereas, 18% stated that the level of international students’ inclusion mainly depended on their school’s location.

Ultimately, most stakeholder respondents thought that international students felt excluded in the U.S. society, having identified a number of factors that contributed to their feeling of exclusion. Those factors included current political climate, employment restrictions, temporary status, ethnic discrimination, individual situations, cultural differences, lack of interaction with domestic students, lack of empathy from the U.S. community members, pressure from family, pressure to succeed, as well as school type and location.

**Reasons behind stakeholders’ decision to work with international students and influence of identities on their attitudes towards F-1 students.** Although there are many ways in which one can get involved in the type of work where international students are their primary population of service/interaction, most of the stakeholder respondents (73%) in my sample assumed their current roles willfully, as a result of either their forgoing pursuit of a career in international education or as a consequence of their past experiences where they had
been exposed to international travel or other environments that had laid a foundation for their
current roles.

Stakeholders’ identities and personal backgrounds played a big role in how they
described their attitudes towards international students. From the data collected, it was
evident that those individuals who were either first-generation immigrants or had studied
abroad in the past, were able to build on their personal experiences and identify as being
more compassionate and understanding of international students as a result of those
experiences. Therefore, having an outsider’s perspective, they were more aware of the factors
that were contributing to international students’ feeling of exclusion.

Unauthorized Labor

Students. Out of the total of 38 respondents (100%), fourteen (37%) admitted to
having had worked without proper work authorization, while twelve (32%) acknowledged to
having had done their CPT or OPT in the field that was entirely unrelated to their major. In
sum, vast majority of the student sample (69%) reported, either knowingly or otherwise
unintentionally, to having violated one of the conditions for lawful maintenance of their
nonimmigrant F-1 status.

Employer mistreatment. Out of the total of 38 respondents (100%), 16% reported
cases of major employer mistreatment in the workplace. All but one student participant who
reported harassment, discrimination or any other form of mistreatment experienced at the
hand of their employer, worked in the United States without proper work authorization. The
six student respondents who shared stories of employer mistreatment, worked in one or both
of the following industries: hospitality and childcare. All were young women. Employer
mistreatment examples shared by those young women included: sexual harassment, employer
stealing tips, delays in remuneration, not issuing a paycheck, being laid off without prior notice, being forced to work overtime under intimidation of getting fired if noncompliant, and almost being raped and having to hide in a closet.

Additionally, 16% had mixed feelings about their employers and the ways in which they were treated. For example, those student participants might have not experienced any severe form of mistreatment at the hand of their employer, but they did indicate that they were either not paid for their work, underpaid, or fired because their employer did not want to sponsor their H-1B visa.

Stummigration. Most student respondents (61%) that I interviewed had an intent to stay in the United States upon the completion of their studies. This position in itself could be interpreted as a major contributing factor to their work-related struggles. Had they been, as traditional stance on international students implies, bona-fide students from wealthy families who studied in the United States only because they could afford it and who would then go back as more marketable in the eyes of their home countries’ workforce, my study participants would not be forced into the underground economy.

This fact alone indicates a transnational mobility issue, as there are practically no pathways for ambitious young people around the world to immigrate to the United States if they do not have family members or employers willing to sponsor their green cards without personally knowing them (Flynn & Dalmia, 2008). Therefore, in a highly globalized world, where the connection between temporary and permanent immigration is continuously growing (Batalova, 2006), with a rising middle class in developing countries, many young people choose to study abroad with the hopes of socio-economic mobility. Unfortunately, the demands of neoliberal capitalism and contemporary visa regimes, makes foreign workers feel
marginalized despite their documented status, as just because they have a valid visa does not mean their rights are protected (Banerjee, 2010).

**Stakeholders.** About 45% of stakeholder participants encountered international students who had shared their experiences of having been treated unfairly at work. Some of those stories revealed an issue of international students working without authorization, which naturally fostered their negative experiences in a workplace. Examples of mistreatment included not being paid or underpaid, being overworked, and having experienced sexual harassment.

**Resilience and Proactive Coping**

**Students.** By combining theories on emotion- versus problem-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), goal-centered coping (Carver & Scheier, 2008), and adaptive mechanisms emerging from the discrepancy between goals and means of achieving them (Merton, 1938), I came up with an operational definition of coping for this study, which referred to student participants’ problem solving mechanisms, specifically in relation to their ultimate goals and ways in which they chose to achieve them.

I evaluated students’ own perceptions on coping and compared them with their actual adaptive mechanisms evidenced from the stories shared with me by student participants prior to our discussions about their coping techniques utilized in the face of employment-related immigration policies. I found that most student participants (66%) resorted to emotion-focused rather than problem-focused coping during the times of difficulties imposed on them by restrictive work regulations. However, based on the students’ stories about their survival strategies outside the scope of our conversations about their coping mechanisms, most respondents (60.5%), contradictorily, acted on their problems and did not just accept them as
reality. Those students by no means turned to conformity as they sought innovative adaptive mechanisms in their fight with immigration-imposed obstacles. The ultimate finding was that most student respondents did not give themselves enough credit for what they went through and how much more resilient, strong, perseverant, hard-working, and innovative they actually were in their ways of trying to find solutions to seemingly impossible-to-overcome obstacles.

**Meanings assigned to the concept of work.** For most student participants, work meant by far more than just mere remuneration for one’s job well done. Student respondents viewed work as a way of social integration, meaningful contribution to society, personal and professional development. Work provided students an opportunity for emotional fulfillment, happiness, financial security, independence, economic mobility, and success. And for some, work was a big part of their identity.

**Swimming against the current: F-1 students and employment.** All 38 student participants (100%) worked during their F-1 journeys, in many different capacities, such as on-campus, CPT, OPT, under-the-table, graduate assistantships, and unpaid internships/volunteering. While 55% of student participants identified having worked both on and off campus, with 5% only having worked on campus, in contrast, 40% of respondents had only worked off campus. Most of the student respondents who only worked off campus, either did both CPT and OPT or worked exclusively without proper work authorization/under-the-table. Several students, however, did a combination of both.

**Places of employment.** Altogether, 38 (100%) student participants held roughly 82 jobs in 20 different industries: academia/research/teaching; child care/babysitting; construction; dining/catering; engineering; finance/banking/investments/accounting;
hospitality/ housekeeping; healthcare; higher education/ student affairs; hospitality;
information technology; K-12; marketing/ media/ communications; non-profit; restaurant/
customer service; retail/ wholesale/ sales; sports/ coaching, and transportation.

*Job acquisition sources.* Altogether, there were ten ways identified by students
through which they had found their employers. Job acquisition sources for 82 identified jobs
included: career services department at school (27%), family connection (15%), online
(12%), networking (11%), direct walk-in inquiry (10%), part of the academic program
admission packet (7%), friend connection (7%), staffing agency/ recruiter (5%), direct
referral (4%), and local country-specific community (2%).

*Nature and scope of jobs undertaken.* Altogether, 38 (100%) student participants
indicated having held 40 different job titles: accountant, babysitter; bank associate; bartender;
bookstore associate; business administrator; cashier; caterer; cleaner; coach; construction
worker; cook; counselor; customer service representative; direct caregiver; engineer; equity
research analyst; finance consultant; golf club front desk associate; hotel receptionist;
housekeeper; insurance sales representative; investment fiscal analyst; peer advisor; peer
mentor; IT helpdesk assistant; marketing analyst; office assistant; package handler; pizza
delivery driver; news reporter; sales associate; social media coordinator; stock broker;
student ambassador; teacher/ tutor; trade center associate; videographer; waiter/ server, and
warehouse worker.

*Relation of F-1 workers’ experiences to their long-term career goals.* Most student
participants regarded their experiences despite them being non-related to their career
aspirations, as they taught them transferable soft skills, helped with a resume, gave them an
opportunity to learn English, to interact with people, made them feel appreciated, allowed
them to gain experience and build character. And all of the respondents who managed to find work in their field of study, reported a high level of satisfaction with their jobs, as those experiences enabled them to ultimately move up in their careers.

Students’ reflections on their F-1 journeys. In reflections on their F-1 journeys, 89% of the student participants admitted that they would have never had experienced the challenges they had encountered in the United States as nonimmigrant temporary residents had they chosen to pursue their postsecondary education in their home countries. Work-restriction-related, linguistic, and cultural barriers, all could have been avoided had they stayed home. However, student respondents also admitted that those very barriers were what actually made them into people they were today: hard-working, resilient, independent, and empowered.

Ultimately, despite all of the hurdles that came along with international students’ job seeking strategies, places of employment, nature and scope of jobs undertaken, employer treatment experiences, and so on, the overall finding was that the student respondents predominately had no regrets about trying to work while in an F-1 status. Work made them stronger, more confident, taught them a variety of skills, and had an enormous influence on their personal development.

Stakeholders. The most common stakeholder participants’ responses to the question about international students’ driving factors included better opportunities, quality and prestige of the U.S. higher education, as well as a gateway into the country. Additional reasons identified by the respondents were: American dream, family expectation, way to escape, globalization, marketing force of U.S. colleges, seeking challenge, experiencing U.S. culture, and learning English. Having an understanding that not all F-1 students come to the
United States merely for education, my stakeholder participants were able to recognize how difficult it was for many of their international students whose goals were broader than just classes attendance and homework.

**Stummigration.** Forty-five percent of stakeholder respondents said that many international students wanted to stay in the United States based on their experiences, and 32% admitted that some students wanted to stay in the United States, and some did not. Out of the 45% of stakeholder participants who stated that many international students wanted to stay in the United States, more than half said that, in fact, the vast majority of F-1 students they interacted with had expressed a desire to immigrate to the United States. According to some stakeholder respondents, many international students also openly expressed their desire to extend their F-1 status in order to gain the opportunity to stay longer in the country, not necessarily for immigration purposes.

Ultimately, according to the interviewed stakeholders, many international students wanted to stay in the United States despite their acknowledgment of all the difficulties they might encounter in the process. And those F-1 students who did not intend to stay in the country, often had much more to gain than lose by going back home.

**Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

Currently, the U.S. government is utilizing an immigration enforcement strategy that is misguided because of a highly restrictive visa regime combined with the premium costs of higher education that are slowly putting the country at a disadvantage. The U.S. university level education costs are the highest in the world, and they have only been going up (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Furthermore, current restrictions on international student employment rights are counterproductive because
opportunity to gain work experience is becoming one of the most important drivers of student mobility worldwide, and many countries are beginning to realize that policies governing students’ ability to work have a direct connection to the number of international students they receive (Farrugia, 2016). For example, following the implementation of the policy restricting the availability of post-study work visas in the UK, resulted in a major decline (by 50% from 2011 to 2014) of international students from India (Farrugia, 2016). Additionally, more and more international students in the United States choose to engage in OPT after graduation. The fact that an increasing number of students want to stay for work and for longer periods, indicates how important this aspect of international education experience is for international students (Farrugia, 2016).

Keeping this in mind, it would be prudent to recommend higher education leaders to advocate for this student population by educating employers and policy makers about the benefits of being inclusive of international students, while providing them with as many hands-on projects and career-related opportunities as possible. What is even more important to address here, is that international students are human beings, who are entitled to a number of rights simply because they are human. Human rights are universal, inalienable, and essential to promotion of international collaboration as well as social progress (UDHR, (UNGA, 1948)). And even though human rights should apply to everyone, there are certain groups that face particular barriers in exercising them. Youth in general is one of those vulnerable groups as young people often encounter difficulties in accessing employment as well as many other attributes that constitute a meaningful participation in society (European Youth Forum, n.d.). So, when it comes to the rights of migrant youth, or international student population in particular, their in-between status of nonimmigrant residents creates even more
barriers to full participation in the life of their community. Needless to say, the barriers have to be removed.

The main task of existing human rights instruments and mechanisms is to support those groups whose rights are being violated by trying to close the existing gaps in inequality. The UN recognizes that “young people are valuable partners for reaching the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (UNAOC, 2016, n.p) and identifies the rise in vulnerable employment being amongst the emerging trends in the context of education and global development (UNESCO, 2012). The boundaries between learning, working, and living are blurring, and this phenomenon challenges the states to develop new approaches that enable flexible access to skills development (UNESCO, 2012).

Sadly, the United States remains stagnant in that direction, at least in relation to F-1 students. A “shift from diplomacy and coercion at the nation-state level toward a more individualized view of how aliens are to be protected” (Kent, 2015, p.1073) needs to happen as soon as possible. International students are not just nonimmigrants, temporary migrants, unauthorized workers, or cash cows; they are first of all human beings, and their rights and dignity should not be disregarded just because of the socially constructed category they fall into.

Today’s highly restrictive policies are not impossible to navigate, but the law makes it clear to international students in the United States that employment is discouraged. The law is outdated as it does not adequately respond to the modern needs that have rapidly emerged from globalization. Globalization transformed employment relations and now entails more volatility and less security (Auer, 2006). Under globalization, we are witnessing a changing relationship between territoriality, institutions, and social structures (Giddens, 1990). Indeed,
globalization has reshaped the world of work in profound ways, yet many benefits of globalization are not being shared equally (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA], 2004). Even the new 2030 sustainable development agenda (UN, 2015) distressfully aligns with market-based economic growth strategies rather than the realization of the human rights to full employment and decent work for all (Frey and MacNaughton, 2016). Unfortunately, interests and benefits alone do not have as much power as our morality and prejudice, the latter playing an important role in our motivations.

Our countries need to encourage human freedom (Moses, 2006) that in itself includes decent work for all, social protection, and right to work (ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008). The government needs to decrease its overly restrictive regulations towards what international students can and cannot do and reframe the laws in ways which would adequately meet the dynamics of our continuously evolving global society. Our laws need to be able to adapt quickly to the needs of our modern world, but most importantly, they need to recognize human dignity as the core principle that should go into their formation.

The U.S. Congress needs to reexamine and ultimately reestablish the nature of the existing employment policies as they relate to international students studying in the United States. The language of the current policies should not be based on the assumption that international students are potential terrorists, but on the promotion of inclusive environment that would give students from around the world a chance to live a life of dignity. If international students were U.S. citizens or permanent residents, they would be protected under the U.S. Constitution, labor law, and many others. If international students had an immigration status that did not restrict their employment rights in the United States, they
would be protected under the Civil Rights Law, Immigration and Nationality Act, Labor Law, and Conventions on Antidiscrimination of Migrants Workers. But the reality is that international students are not considered to be migrants, so any laws regarding migrants, both documented and undocumented, bypass them and place them in between the existing categories.

The new policies should be applicable to the socio-economic needs of international youth living in the United States and need to be expanded and implemented in a way that would empower young individuals from around the world to exercise their human rights and have the capacity to grow and develop. International students need a lot of support from policy makers, practitioners, scholars, organizations, and community members. International students are our future; therefore, their voice and participation need to be at the center of the policy change discourse.

**Implications and Recommendations for Future Research**

I hope that the aforementioned discoveries motivate researchers from an array of academic disciplines to delve deeper into the understudied issue of the impact current immigration policies have on the socio-economic well-being of international F-1 students. I hope that the findings of this study provoke an honest discussion about the unspoken realities faced by a vulnerable population of international F-1 students studying and working in the United States. I believe that my research makes a valuable contribution to the academic world as it initiates and advocates for the progression of the scholarly debate about international students' socio-economic well-being on a transdisciplinary level. While I recognize that policies cannot change overnight, I fear that the longer we ignore the voices of international students, the more pointless it will be to even have that conversation, as more
and more internationally-bound students are already choosing other countries over the United States for their postsecondary studies.

The U.S. government is trying to frame this population as a potential threat to our national security. By holding on to those perceptions at the expense of the most vulnerable, the government is only making the gap between the real needs and the actual policies addressing those needs, much larger than it has to be. More research studies that challenge the existing set of perceptions that no longer benefit anybody, need to emerge, with a specific focus on the voices of international F-1 students.

I argue that a shift needs to happen in a way we research experiences of international students. The stagnant list of the “mainstream challenges” (Abdullah et al., 2014, p.248) that so much literature on international students seems to be focusing on, needs to be expanded. A transdisciplinary and more holistic approach in researching international F-1 students’ experiences is necessary, specifically within the frameworks of human rights and development, paying close attention to one of the most important aspects that shapes human identities – employment.

Not only the right to work and free choice of employment is a human right, work is also a huge part of American culture, and for many people, work is an important aspect of their identity (Bessen-Cassino, 2014). For many students in the United States, an opportunity to hold a job, even if it is unrelated to their careers, allows them to express themselves, feel useful, feel like they are making a difference, and feel like they are in charge of something (Bessen-Cassino, 2014). However, in the case of international students, their immigration status implies numerous barriers that diminish access to employment opportunities (Urban & Berlein Palmer, 2016).
International F-1 students pursuing their studies in the United States need to be given access to unconditional employment because inability to work forces them to break the law by working illegally, as evidenced in this study. That, in turn, puts foreign students in a vulnerable position and makes it possible for employers to exploit them. An opportunity to gain off-campus employment like the rest of their fellow students, would result in increased levels of social and economic equality amongst all members of the community and help international students develop skills that are necessary to compete in the global economy.

Major problems, such as illegal immigration, unauthorized labor, and tax evasion, all stem from the current tough policies towards legal immigration to the United States. And although there are no ultimate solutions to the world migration in general, history shows that small liberalizations are possible (Hatton & Williamson, 2008). My argument is in favor of exactly that – a small liberalization of one group of migrants that can make a big difference. According to Hatton and Williamson (2008), who support the idea of student migration, an increase in the levels of high-skilled immigration will only benefit the host country. Countries like Canada, New Zealand, and Australia are more skill-selective than the United States, where employment-based immigration accounts for a small number of its total immigrant pool (Hatton and Williamson, 2008). Skilled immigrants in the United States only account for 12% of its total immigrant population (DHS, 2017), whereas in countries like Canada and Australia the share of employment-based permanent-resident admissions account for over 61 percent (Griswold, 2017).

Instead of building walls, the United States needs to start building bridges with the modern world and focus on attracting as many skilled migrants as possible, making them feel welcome and proud of being a part of this country. The key to integration is in creation of
public policies that are oriented towards a better living together, policies that are both economically-sound and labor-sensitive (Price & Chacko, 2012). Unfortunately, the “otherness”, the “temporariness”, and the “inbetweenness” of the international students’ nonimmigrant status, makes them feel like some “semi-finished human capital” (Khadria, 2001, p.45). Such exclusion takes place because instead of protecting these international students who contribute to the country’s financial, intellectual, and cultural prosperity, the U.S. government punishes them by constraining their freedom. And global capitalism is the reason why temporary immigration is becoming so prominent.

The neoliberal stance of the U.S. government on temporary migration is that it is beneficial for everybody, however the real truth is that the restrictive nature of such a regime only benefits one side and disadvantages the other. Instead of recognizing that global inequality is a shared problem of humanity, the developed world builds walls to keep the developing world out (Moses, 2006). There are many differences that separate those two worlds. Sadly, instead of trying to decrease the gap produced by those differences and creating a mutually beneficial partnership, developed States prefer to frame less fortunate States as a threat to their political, economic, and social well-being.

International students in the United States constitute a heterogeneous group of individuals and assume many roles that affect the manner in which they are perceived (Hanassab, 2006). What is indisputable, however, is that international students represent one of the most positive consequences of globalization, not an immigrant issue, and by far not a criminal one. They deserve an opportunity, not exclusion.
APPENDIX

A. STUDENTS: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Pseudonym_______________________________________________________

What country were you born in?________________________________________

What is your immigration status today?

  o  F-1 Student
  o  F-1 Student on a post-completion OPT
  o  H-1B Worker
  o  Permanent Resident
  o  U.S. Citizen
  o  Other_______________________________________________________

What visa did you enter the United States with at the time when you ended up becoming an F-1 student?

  o  B-1/B2
  o  F-1
  o  J-1
  o  Other_______________________________________________________

What is your gender? (Gender is not a biological sex, which might differ from gender. Gender is what you identify as. For example, I identify as a female and use pronouns she/her/hers)

  o  Female
  o  Male
  o  Other_______________________________________________________

How old are you now (number)?________________________________________

How old were you when you came to the United States, specifically at the time when you actually ended up residing in the country as an F-1 student (number)?________________________
As of right now, how long have you lived in the United States?

- Less than 6 months
- 1 - 2 years
- 2 - 3 years
- 3 - 4 years
- More than 5 years

What is your marital status?

- Single/ Never Married
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Other __________________________

What is your nationality (citizenship)? __________________________

What is your race? (The researcher understands that race is a social construct. However, this question refers to the biological/physical appearance. For example, you can say that your race is white, black, Latino (white), Latino (black), Latino (mixed race), Asian, 2 or more races, Other. But feel free to elaborate. For example, I am "Other" because even though I'm white, I'm half "indigenous person of the Ural Mountains," so I don't identify as a white person due to my dark features, high cheekbones and narrow eyes. Another example: my husband is a mixed-race Latino. His mother is a white Latina and his father is a brown Latino) __________________________

What is your ethnicity? (Ethnicity is the term for the culture of people in a given geographic region, including their language, heritage, religion and customs. For example, I'm Russian and Udmurt. My husband is Colombian (even though he was born in the U.S.). My friend is French and Irish, even though she was born in Australia and is now a U.S. citizen) __________________________

What was your family's socio-economic status when at the time you came to the U.S. and became an F-1 student?

- Upper Class
- Upper Middle Class
- Lower Middle Class
- Working Class
- Poor
- Other __________________________

What is your religion? __________________________
What is the highest academic degree that you have completed at the moment?

- Associate’s
- Bachelor’s
- 2 or more Bachelor’s
- Master’s
- 2 or more Master’s
- Doctorate
- Other

What type of program are/ were you attending?

- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Non-degree student
- Other

What type of institution do/ did you go to?

- Public college/ university
- Private college/ university
- Language School
- Other

What is/ was your major/ field of study?

What is your employment status now?

- Employed Full-Time
- Employed Part-Time
- Unemployed
- Other
B. STUDENTS: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Semi Structured Aide Memoir**

Why did you decide to study abroad?

Why did you choose to study in the United States specifically?

Did anyone/anything influence your decision?

How did your identity and background effect your decision to come to the United States and become an F-1 student?

What is/ was the most difficult part of being an international student on an F-1 visa?

Did your experience of being an international student in the United States meet your pre-departure expectations?

Why did you make the decision to work in the United States? Could you please tell me about your experience?

Do/ Did you want to work in the United States? If so, when did you first realize that? If no, then why not.

How did you find your employer(s)?

What was the nature of your work? How were you treated?

Did you at any point feel helpless, harassed, treated unfairly at work? If so, how did that treatment make you feel?

Did you think that working in the United States while pursuing your degree was going to help you achieve your long-term career or any other goals? In what way?

What do you think about immigration policies related to international students’ ability to work in the U.S.?

What would you change about current employment-related immigration policies outlined for F-1 students within the law?

How do/did F-1 employment-related immigration policies affect your socio-economic well-being?

What do/did your coping strategies look like in the face of such policies?
Would you have similar issues that you might have experienced while living in the United States as an F-1 student, if you were living in your home country at the moment?

Do you ever think about going/ do you want to go back to your home country? Why or why not?

What does “work” mean to you?

Do/did you feel fully included in the U.S. society while being an F-1 student?
C. STAKEHOLDERS: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Pseudonym__________________________________________________________

What country were you born in?__________________________________________

Are you an immigrant or a first generation American?

  o Yes, I am a first-generation immigration in the United States
  o Yes, I am a first generation American. I was born here, but at least one of my parents was born in a different country
  o No, I am not
  o Other______________________________________________________________

How old are you (number)?______________________________________________

What is your gender? (Gender is not a biological sex, which might differ from gender. Gender is what you identify as. For example, I identify as a female and use pronouns she/her/hers)

  o Female
  o Male
  o Other______________________________________________________________

What is your ethnicity/ancestry? (Ethnicity is the term for the culture of people in a given geographic region, including their language, heritage, religion and customs. For example, I'm Russian and Udmurt. My husband is Colombian (even though he was born in the U.S.). My friend is French and Irish, even though she was born in Australia and is now a U.S. citizen)________________________

What is the nature of your collaboration with international F-1 students? (For example, I am an international student advisor at X University; I am a Human Resources manager at X Hospital; I am currently studying along/working with international students; International students are my customers, etc.)__________________________________________

What is the main focus of your involvement with F-1 students? (For example, one of my job responsibilities is to manage all of our international students' hiring processes; I advise F-1 students on immigration; my main responsibility is to process international students’ admissions paperwork; I sell services/products to international students; I am a peer student, etc.)________________________
Do you currently and have served in the past as either a Designated School Official or Principal Designated School Official?

- Yes
- No
- Other___________________________________________________

What type of institution/organization do you currently work at? Please share as much details as you can.

- Public college/ university
  __________________________________________________________

- Private college/ university
  __________________________________________________________

- Language School
  __________________________________________________________

- Business Serving International Students
  __________________________________________________________

- Other
  __________________________________________________________
D. STAKEHOLDERS: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Semi Structured Aide Memoir

Why/how did you end up working with international students?

If the nature of your collaboration wasn't work-related, please specify.

How did/ Did your identity and background effect your work with/attitude towards international students?

What is the most difficult part of working/ collaborating with international students on an F-1 visa? If you don't/ didn't work with international students, then what was the most difficult thing about being in the classroom with them/ living with them/ interacting with them?

Do you think that international students feel fully included in the United States society? If yes, how so? If no, why not.

From hearing international students' stories, do you think that F-1 employment-related immigration policies affect their socio-economic well-being in any way? Yes/No: please elaborate and explain why you think that is.

Why do you think international students want to study in the United States?

From what you heard directly from students, do many F-1 students struggle financially?

Do many of international students you interact/ interacted with tell you that they want/ wanted to stay in/ move to the United States?

What do you think about immigration policies related to international students’ ability to work in the United States?

What would you change / Would you change anything about current employment-related policies outlined for F-1 students within the law?

Do you think that it is a fair argument that international students should not be allowed to freely work wherever and for whomever they want to because without such restrictions, international students would be taking U.S. citizens’ and U.S. residents' jobs?

Do you think it's fair for public universities to decline applications of U.S. citizens over better qualified international students? Keep in mind that international students pay double or triple of what an in-state resident student would pay. Also, let's hypothesize that had the school not accepted international students at all, then those U.S. citizens who were otherwise declined an admission, would then be accepted to that public university? Thoughts?
Did you at any point encounter international students who shared with you their experiences of having been treated unfairly at work? If yes, please share the details.
Table E.1

*Student Participants: Country of Birth by Geographic Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>37%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>16%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>16%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>16%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurasia</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>13%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>2%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**6 geographic regions** | **27 countries** | **38** | **100%**
**Table E.2**

*Student Participants: Current Immigration Status: F-1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Immigration Status</th>
<th>Entry Visa</th>
<th>Current Employment Status</th>
<th>Academic Program Type</th>
<th>Years in the United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>UG + GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>3-4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1 - OPT</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>3-4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1 - OPT</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1 - OPT</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>3-4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table E.3**

*Student Participants: Former F-1 Students/ Current Immigration Status: H-1B*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Immigration Status</th>
<th>Entry Visa</th>
<th>Current Employment Status</th>
<th>Highest Degree Obtained at the Moment</th>
<th>Years in the United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>3-4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>UG + GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.4

Student Participants: Former F-1 Students/ Current Immigration Status: Green Card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Immigration Status</th>
<th>Entry Visa</th>
<th>Current Employment Status</th>
<th>Highest Degree Obtained at the Moment</th>
<th>Years in the United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Non-Degree</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>3-4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>AA + GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table E.5

Student Participants: Former F-1 Students/ Current Immigration Status: U.S. Citizen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Immigration Status</th>
<th>Entry Visa</th>
<th>Current Employment Status</th>
<th>Highest Degree Obtained at the Moment</th>
<th>Years in the United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>UG+GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>H-4</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table E.6

**Student Participants: Entry Visa VS Current Immigration Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry Visa</th>
<th>Current Immigration Status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-4</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.7

*Female Student Participants: Country of Birth by Geographic Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>31.6% VS 15.8%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>10.5% VS 5.3%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8% VS 7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>21% VS 10.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>15.8% VS 7.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurasia</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8% VS 7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>15.8% VS 7.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>5.26% VS 2.63%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 geographic regions</td>
<td>15 countries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(19=100% VS 38=100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.8

Male Student Participants: Country of Birth by Geographic Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8% VS 7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5% VS 5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5% VS 5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.1% VS 21%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5% VS 5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5% VS 5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>21% VS 10.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.8% VS 7.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.26% VS 2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.5% VS 5.3%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurasia</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5% VS 5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.5% VS 5.3%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0% VS 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0% VS 0%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 geographic regions</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 countries</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>(19 = 100%) VS (38 = 100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table E.9

Residence Duration from the Shortest to Longest with Entry and Current Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in the US</th>
<th>Current Age</th>
<th>Age of Entry</th>
<th>Entry Visa</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1 OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Perm. Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Perm. Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>US Perm. Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1 OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>US Perm. Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>US Perm. Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>US Perm. Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>US Perm. Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F-1</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>US Perm. Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Perm. Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Perm. Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>H-4</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.10

*Student Participants: Marital Status Aligned with Entry Visa, Current Immigration Status, Gender, Region, and Mode*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Entry Status</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
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<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Eurasia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
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<td>South America</td>
</tr>
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<td>Green Card</td>
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<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Eurasia</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
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<td>Asia</td>
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<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
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<td>South America</td>
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<td>F-1</td>
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<td>F-1</td>
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<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
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<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Eurasia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>South America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>South America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>H-4</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>South America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mode**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Entry Status</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
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<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Female</td>
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**Mode**

<table>
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<th>Entry Status</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>F-1</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Eurasia</td>
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**Mode**

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<th>Entry Status</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Europe</td>
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<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Eurasia</td>
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Table E.11

Student Participants: Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race – Categorized by Researcher</th>
<th>Race – Stated by the Respondents</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Russia</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White Latina</td>
<td>Chile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White Latino</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Latino + European</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White Middle Eastern</td>
<td>Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White with African Origins</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 16 (42%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 9 (24%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 5 (13%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or More Races</td>
<td>2 or More Races</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or More Races</td>
<td>Mixed Race Latina</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 2 (5%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 6 (16%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 38 (100%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Table E.12

*Student Participants: Ethnicity – Different than the Country of Origin*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek</td>
<td>2 or more races</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td><strong>Africa</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mossi</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chagga</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td><strong>South America</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Spanish/ Half French</td>
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<td>Bolivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td><strong>Europe</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German and Bulgarian</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian and Gagauz</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union, Ukrainian, Russian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
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### Table E.13

*Family’s Socio-Economic Status at the Time of Entry with Further Details*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/E Background</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Entry Visa</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>2 or &gt;Master's</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>2 or &gt;Master’s</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>2 or &gt;Master’s</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
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<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/w UM &amp; LM</td>
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<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2 or &gt;Master's</td>
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<td>F-1</td>
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<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>2 or &gt;Master's</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
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<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>2 or &gt;Master's</td>
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<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
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<td>2 or &gt;Master's</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>India</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
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<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1 OPT</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Iran</td>
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<td>Green Card</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
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<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bachelor’s</td>
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<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1 OPT</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1 OPT</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
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<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>2 or &gt;Master's</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td>F-1</td>
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<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
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</table>
### Table E.14

**Student Participants: Religion Aligned with the Country of Origin, Socio-Economic Background and Highest Degree Achieved**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Socio-Economic Background</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>B/w UMC and LMC</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Lower Middle-Class</td>
<td>2 or more Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Non-Degree Certificate</td>
</tr>
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<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>2 or more Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>2 of more Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Catholic</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
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<td>Greece</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>2 or more Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Russia</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Religion</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Socio-Economic Background</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Religious</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>2 or more Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>2 or more Master’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Socio-Economic Background</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>2 or more Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>2 or more Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agnostic</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Socio-Economic Background</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Socio-Economic Background</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>2 or more Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skeptic</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Socio-Economic Background</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skeptical</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.15

*Student Participants: Program Type while on F-1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate Program</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Program</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s + Doctorate</td>
<td>2 Master’s +</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s + Doctorate</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>2 Master’s +</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UG + GR</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s + Master’s</td>
<td>2 Master’s +</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s + Master’s</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s + Master’s</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s + Master’s</td>
<td>2 Master’s +</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Degree</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**               |                         | 38 | 100%       |
Table E.16

*Student Participants: School Type + Program Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UG and GR</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>50%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>34%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UG and GR</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>16%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.17

*Student Participants: Field of Study – Summary with Details about the Major*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Study</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business</strong></td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business/ Digital Marketing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Adm/ Accounting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Adm/ Healthcare Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Adm/ Project Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEM</strong></td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer-Aided Design</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electrical Engineering</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental Sustainability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medical Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visual Communications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanities</strong></td>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Education/ Student Affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitality and Tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Health Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table E.18

**Student Participants: Current Employment Status aligned with Family’s Socio-Economic Background, Highest Academic Degree Achieved, Country of Origin, Entry Visa, and Current Immigration Status Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>S/E Background</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Entry Visa</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>2or &gt;Master's</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>H-4</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>2or &gt;Master's</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>2or &gt;Master's</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>2or &gt;Master's</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>2or &gt;Master's</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1 OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1 OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>B/w UM &amp; LM</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>J-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>H-1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>2or &gt;Master’s</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>HS Diploma</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1 OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>2or &gt;Master’s</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>2or &gt;Master’s</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>2or &gt;Master’s</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>F-1</td>
<td>F-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table E.19

**Student Sample: 38 Student Participants Listed in Alphabetical Order by Their Pseudonym and Followed by Related Demographic Data**

| Pseudonym | Country of Origin | Inmm. Status | Entry Visa | G | Age | E/ Age | Y/ in U.S. | M/S | Citizenship | Race | Ethnicity | Religion | S/E status | H/D | Prog. Type | Sch. Type | Field of Study | Emp. Status |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------|------------|---|-----|--------|------------|-----|-------------|------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Abigail   | Colombia          | Gr/C         | F-1        | F | 30  | 22     | 55         | M   | Colombia   | M    | Cath       | WC       | M          | GR        | PR        | BUS      | FT          |
| Alexandra | Germany           | F-1          | F-1        | F | 47  | 42     | 5          | D   | Germany    | W    | Cath       | USC      | 2+M       | GR        | PU        | HUM      | PT          |
| Anya      | Moldova           | USC          | F-1        | F | 30  | 17     | 5          | D   | Moldova/ USA | W    | Ukrainian/ Gagauz | Agn     | UMC      | B         | UG        | PR       | BUS      | FT          |
| Ash       | India             | H1-B         | F-1        | M | 26  | 22     | 3-4        | NM  | India      | A    | Hindu      | Agn     | UMC      | M         | GR        | PU       | STEM      | FT          |
| Bianca    | Honduras          | Gr/C         | B-1/2      | F | 34  | 24     | 55         | N/M | Honduras   | B    | Hispanic   | Cath     | WC        | B         | UG        | PU       | BUS      | FT          |
| Bina      | Tanzania          | F-1          | F-1        | F | 36  | 27     | 55         | M   | Tanzania   | B    | Chagga     | Chris    | LMC       | M         | GR        | PU       | HUM      | U/E        |
| Braden    | Turkey            | Gr/C         | F-1        | F | 37  | 23     | 55         | M   | Turkey     | O    | Turkish    | Chris    | Mus       | 2+M       | GR        | PU       | BUS      | FT          |
| Caleb     | Greece            | F-1          | F-1        | M | 33  | 28     | 55         | M   | Greece     | O    | Greek      | Orth     | LMC       | 2+M       | GR        | PU       | HUM      | U/E        |
| Celine    | Colombia          | Gr/C         | B-1/2      | F | 31  | 25     | 55         | M   | Colombia   | O    | Colombian  | Cath     | USC       | M         | GR        | PR       | STEM      | PT          |
| Charlize  | Russia            | USC          | F-1        | F | 31  | 22     | 55         | D   | Russia/USA | W    | Russian    | Orth     | WC        | B         | UG        | PU       | HUM      | FT          |
| Daniel    | Indonesia          | F-1/2        | OPT        | F | 25  | 16     | 55         | N/M | Indonesia  | A    | Indonesian/ Chinese Descent | Cath     | UMC      | M         | GR        | PU       | BUS      | PT          |
| Derek     | China             | H1-B         | F-1        | M | 28  | 19     | 55         | N/M | China      | A    | Chinese Han | None     | LMC       | M         | UG/GR     | Both      | BUS      | FT          |
| Gina      | Colombia          | Gr/C         | J-1        | F | 28  | 19     | 55         | M   | Colombia   | O    | Colombian  | None     | WC A      | UC        | UG        | BUS      | FT          |
| Ian       | Morocco           | H1-B         | F-1        | M | 26  | 18     | 55         | N/M | Morocco    | O    | Arab/ Moroccan | Mus     | LMC       | B         | UG        | BUS      | FT          |
| Jack      | Kazakhstan        | F-1          | F-1        | M | 20  | 18     | 1-2        | N/M | Kazakhstan | W    | Russian    | Skep     | UC HS     | UG        | STEM      | PT          |
| Juden     | India             | F-1          | F-1        | M | 25  | 18     | 55         | N/M | India      | A    | Indian     | None     | UMC B     | GR        | Both      | BUS      | U/E        |
| James     | Bolivia           | USC          | F-1        | M | 38  | 28     | 55         | M   | Bolivia/USA | W    | Spanish/ French | Cath     | LMC/ UMC  | M         | GR        | STEM      | FT          |
| Kelvin    | Indonesia         | F-1/2        | OPT        | F | 23  | 19     | 3-4        | N/M | Indonesia  | A    | Chinese/ Indonesian | Chris    | UMC       | B         | UG        | PR       | BUS      | FT          |
| Kat       | Chile             | Gr/C         | F-1        | F | 34  | 21     | 55         | M   | Chile      | W    | Chilean    | Cath     | UMC       | Cert      | N/D       | STEM      | FT          |
| Kruz      | Czech Republic    | Gr/C         | J-1        | M | 33  | 23     | 55         | N/M | Czech Rep  | W    | Czech      | R-Cat    | UMC       | B         | UG        | PU       | STEM      | FT          |
| Leila     | Ukraine           | Gr/C         | J-1        | F | 32  | 21     | 55         | M   | Ukraine    | W    | Ukrainian/ Russia | Cath     | UMC      | Cert      | R-Cat     | STEM      | FT          |
| Maya      | Russia            | H1-B         | F-1        | F | 32  | 28     | 55         | M   | Russian    | O    | Russian    | Chris    | WC D      | GR        | PR        | BUS      | FT          |
| Moahmmad | Nigeria           | F-1          | F-1        | F | 39  | 35     | 3-4        | N/M | Nigeria    | B    | Nigerian   | Chris    | LMC       | M         | GR        | PU       | HUM      | FT          |
| Mireh     | Iran              | Gr/C         | F-1        | F | 31  | 26     | 3-4        | M   | Iran       | W    | Persian    | None     | UMC       | M         | GR        | HUM      | U/E        |
| Morris    | Morocco           | F-1/2        | OPT        | F | 23  | 18     | 3-4        | N/M | Morocco    | W    | Moroccan   | Mus      | UMC B     | UG        | BUS      | FT          |
| Nathan    | Burkina Faso      | F-1          | F-1        | M | 30  | 21     | 55         | N/M | Burkina Faso | B    | Mossi      | Cath     | LMC       | 2+M       | GR        | Both      | HUM      | U/E        |
| Olivia    | Kyrgyzstan        | USC          | F-1        | F | 31  | 22     | 55         | D   | Kyrgyzstan/ USA | W    | Russian    | Orth     | LMC       | M         | GR        | BUS      | FT          |
| Peter     | India             | USC          | F-1        | M | 38  | 20     | 55         | M   | India/USA  | A    | Indian      | Chris    | UMC       | 2+M       | GR        | Both      | BUS      | FT          |
| Rachael   | Saudi Arabia      | F-1          | F-1        | F | 35  | 29     | 55         | D   | Saudi Arabia | 2+    | Uzbek      | Mus      | UC        | 2+M       | GR        | HUM      | U/E        |
| Richard   | Italy             | Gr/C         | F-1        | M | 40  | 34     | 55         | M   | Italian    | W    | Italian    | Cath     | UMC       | 2+M       | GR        | BUS      | FT          |
| Santiago  | Venezuela         | H1-B         | F-1        | F | 24  | 17     | 55         | N/M | Venezuela/ Spain | W    | Spanish    | Cath     | UMC       | B         | UG        | BUS      | FT          |
| Stella    | Uzbekistan        | USC          | F-1        | F | 34  | 22     | 55         | N/M | Uzbekistan/ USA | A    | Uzbek      | Agn      | LMC       | B         | UG        | PU       | BUS      | FT          |
| Tatiana   | Russia            | Gr/C         | J-1        | F | 34  | 22     | 55         | M   | Russia     | W    | Russian    | None     | Not Sure  | 2+M       | UG/GR     | PU       | BUS      | FT          |
| Tess      | Vietnam           | USC          | F-1        | F | 32  | 26     | 55         | M   | Vietnam/ USA | A    | Vietnamese | Agn      | UMC       | M         | GR        | BUS      | FT          |
| Tina      | Mongolia          | F-1          | F-1        | F | 50  | 36     | 55         | M   | Mongolia   | A    | Mongolian   | None     | UMC       | M         | GR        | Both      | HUM      | U/E        |
| Upton     | Turkey            | USC          | F-1        | M | 39  | 25     | 55         | M   | USA        | W    | Turkish    | None     | UMC       | 2+M       | GR        | STEM      | FT          |
| Zach      | Kazakhstan        | USC          | H-4        | M | 31  | 14     | 55         | M   | USA        | W    | Russian    | Chris    | LMC       | B         | UG        | Both      | BUS      | FT          |
| Zayden    | Burkina Faso      | USC          | F-1        | M | 31  | 22     | 55         | M   | USA        | B    | African    | Cath     | UMC       | B         | UG        | PU       | BUS      | FT          |
Descriptive List for the above Table E.19

Student Sample: 38 Student Participants Listed in Alphabetical Order by Their Pseudonym and Followed by Related Demographic Data – Country of Origin; Current Immigration Status; Entry Visa; Gender; Current Age; Age at the Time of Entry; Years in the United States; Marital Status; Citizenship; Race; Ethnicity; Religion; Family’s Socio-Economic Status; Highest Academic Degree Achieved; Program Type; School Type; Field of Study; Current Employment Status

1. Abigail – Colombia; U.S. Resident; J-1; Female; 30; 22; More than 5 years; Married; Colombia; Mixed Race Latina; Colombian; Catholic; Working Class; Master’s; Graduate; Private; MBA/ concentration in Project Management; Full-Time

2. Alexandra – Germany; F-1; F-1; Female; 47; 19 for UG and 42 for GR; More than 5 years; Divorced; Germany; White; German/ Bulgarian/ French; Catholic; Upper Middle Class; 2 or more Master’s; UG and GR; Social Science; Part-Time

3. Anya – Moldova; U.S. Citizen; F-1; Female; 30; 17; More than 5 years; Divorced; Moldova and USA; White; Ukrainian and Gagauz; Agnostic; Upper Middle Class; Bachelor’s; Undergraduate; Private; Business Management; Full-Time

4. Ash – India, H-1B Worker; F-1; Male; 26; 22; 3-4 years; Never Married; Indian; Asian; Hindu; Hinduism; Upper Middle Class; Master’s; Graduate; Private; Computer Science; Full-Time

5. Bianca – Honduras; U.S. Permanent Residents; B1/B2; Female, 34; 24; More than 5 years; Never Married; Honduras; Black; Hispanic; Catholic; Working Class; Bachelor’s; Undergraduate; Public; Business Administration; Full-Time

6. Bina – Tanzania; F-1 Student; F-1; Female; 36; 27; More than 5 years; Married; Tanzania; Black; Chagga; Christian; Lower Middle Class; Master’s; Graduate; Public; International Health; Unemployed

7. Braden – Turkey, U.S. Permanent Resident; F-1; Male; 37; 23; More than 5 years; Married; Turkish; Other; Turkish; Muslim; Upper Middle Class; 2 or More Master’s; Graduate; Private; Finance; Full-Time

8. Caleb – Greece; F-1 Student; F-1; Male; 33; 28; More than 5 Years; Married; Greece; Other - I am Greek/Hellenic. Historically and politically I am not identified as “white”; Greek; Greek; Christian Orthodox; Lower Middle Class; 2 or More Master’s; Graduate; Public; Human rights, economic and social rights; Unemployed

9. Celine – Colombia; U.S. Resident; B-1/ B-2; Female; 31; 25; More than 5 years; Married; Colombia; Latina; Colombian; Catholic; Upper Middle Class; Master's; Graduate; Private; Environmental Sustainability; Part-Time
10. **Charlize** – Russia; U.S. Citizen; J-1; female; 31; 22; More than 5 years; Divorced; USA and Russia; White; Russian; Orthodox; Working Class; Master’s; Undergraduate; Public; Hospitality and Tourism; Full-Time

11. **Daniel** – Indonesia; F-1 – OPT; F-1; Male; 25; 16; More than 5 years; Never Married; Indonesia; Asian; Indonesian of Chinese Descent; Catholic; Upper Middle Class; Master’s; Graduate; Public; Business - Digital Marketing; Part-Time

12. **Derek** – China; H-1B; F-1; Male; 28; 19; More than 5 years; Never Married; China; Asian; Chinese Han; None; Lower Middle Class; Master’s; UG (Public) and GR (Private); Both; Finance; Part-Time

13. **Gina** – Colombia; U.S. Resident; J-1; Female; 28; 19; More than 5 years; Married; Colombia; Latina; Colombian; No Religion; Working Class; Associate’s; Undergraduate; Public; Hospitality Management; Part-Time

14. **Ian** – Morocco; H-1B; F-1; Male; 26; 18; More than 5 years; Never Married; Morocco; Other; Arab/ Moroccan; Muslim; Lower Middle Class; Bachelor's; Undergraduate; Public Business Administration/Accounting; Full-Time

15. **Jack** – Kazakhstan; F-1; F-1; Male; 20; 18; 1-2 years; Never Married; Kazakhstan; White; Russian; Skeptical; Upper Class; High School; Undergraduate; Public; Computer-Aided Design; Part-Time

16. **Jaden** – India; F-1; F-1; Male; 25; 18; More than 5 years; Never Married; India; Asian Indian; Indian; Atheist; Upper Middle Class; Bachelor's; UG (Public) and GR (Private); Both; Business Management; Unemployed

17. **James** – Bolivia; U.S. Citizen; F-1; Male; 38; 28; More than 5 years; Married; Bolivia and USA; Latino + European; Half Spanish/ Half French; Catholic; Between Upper and Lower Middle Class; Master's; Graduate; Public; Computer Science; Full-Time

18. **Kalvin** – Indonesia; F-1 – OPT; F-1; Male; 23; 19; 3-4 years; Never Married; Indonesia; Asian; Chinese-Indonesian; Christian; Upper Middle Class; Bachelor's; Undergraduate; Private; BBA in Finance; Full-Time

19. **Kat** – Chile; U.S. Resident; F-1; Female; 34; 21; More than 5 years; Married; Chile; White Latina; Chilean; Catholic; Upper Middle Class; Certificate; Non-Degree; Private; Medical Assistant; Full-Time

20. **Kruz** - Czech Republic; U.S. Resident; J-1; Male; 33; 23; More than 5 years; Never Married; Czech Republic; White; Czech; Roman Catholic; Upper Middle Class; Bachelor's; Undergraduate; Public; Visual Communications; Full-Time
21. **Leila** – Ukraine; U.S. Resident; J-1; Female; 32; 21; More than 5 years; Married; Ukraine; White; USSR/ Ukrainian/ Russia; Christian Orthodox; Working Class; Master's; Graduate; Public; Higher Education/ Student Affairs; Full-Time

22. **Maya** – Russia; H-1B; F-1; Female; 32; 28; More than 5 years; Married; Russian; Other; Russian; Christian; Working Class; Doctorate; Graduate; Private; Management; Full-Time

23. **Meaghan** – Nigeria; F-1; F-1; Female; 39; 35; 3-4 years; Never Married; Nigeria; Black; Nigerian; Christianity; Lower Middle Class; Master's; Graduate; Public; International Development; Part-Time

24. **Mirah** – Iran; U.S. Resident; F-1; Female; 31; 26; 3-4 years; Married; Iran; White (Middle Eastern); Persian; No religion. Born a Muslim; Upper Middle Class; Master's; Graduate; Private; Journalism; Unemployed

25. **Morris** – Morocco; F-1 – OPT; F-1; Male; 23; 18; 3-4 years; Never Married; Morocco; White with African origins; Moroccan; Islam; Upper Middle Class; Bachelor's; Undergraduate; Public; Business Administration; Full-Time

26. **Nathan** – Burkina Faso; F-1; F-1; Male; 30; 21; More than 5 years; Never Married; Burkina Faso; Black; Mossi; Catholic; Lower Middle Class; 2 or more Master's; Graduate; Both; Conflict Resolution; Unemployed

27. **Olivia** – Kyrgyzstan; U.S. Citizen; F-1; Female; 31; 22; More than 5 years; Divorced; Kyrgyzstan and USA; White; Russian; Orthodox; Lower Middle Class; Master's; Graduate; Private; Finance; Full-Time

28. **Peter** – India; U.S. Citizen; F-1; Male; 38; 20; More than 5 years; Married; India and USA; South Asian; Indian; Hinduism; Upper Middle Class; 2 or more Master's; UG and GR; Both; Finance; Full-Time

29. **Rachael** – Saudi Arabia; F-1; F-1; Female; 35; 29; More than 5 years; Divorced; Saudi Arabia; 2 or more races; Uzbek; Muslim; Upper Class; 2 or more Master's; Graduate; Public; Social Studies; Unemployed

30. **Richard** – Italy; U.S. Resident; F-1; Male; 40; 34; More than 5 years; Married; Italian; White; Italian; Christian Catholic; Upper Middle Class; 2 or more Master's; Graduate; Private; Business Administration; Full-Time

31. **Santiago** – Venezuela; H-1B; F-1; Male; 24; 17; More than 5 years; Never Married; Venezuela and Spain; White Latino; Spanish; Catholic; Upper Middle Class; Bachelor's; Undergraduate; Private; Business; Full-Time
32. Stella – Uzbekistan; U.S. Citizen; F-1; Female; 34; 22; More than 5 years; Never Married; Uzbekistan and USA; Asian; Uzbek; Spiritual; Lower Middle Class; Bachelor's; Undergraduate; Public; Accounting; Full-Time

33. Tatiana – Russia; U.S. Resident; J-1; Female; 34; 22; More than 5 years; Married; Russia; White; Russian; None; Not Sure; 2 or more Master's; AA and GR; Public; Business; Full-Time

34. Tess – Vietnam; U.S. Citizen; F-1; Female; 32; 26; More than 5 years; Married; Vietnam and USA; Asian; Vietnamese; Raised Buddhist, but now – agnostic; Upper Middle Class; Master's; Graduate; Private; MBA/ Focus: Health Care Management; Full-Time

35. Tina – Mongolia; F-1; F-1; Female; 50; 36; More than 5 years; Married; Mongolia; Asian; Mongolian; None; Upper Middle Class; Master's; Graduate; Both; Development; Unemployed

36. Upton – Turkey; U.S. Citizen; F-1; Male; 39; 25; More than 5 years; Married; USA; White; Turkish; Non-religious; Upper Middle Class; 2 or more Master's; Graduate; Private; Electrical Engineering; Full-Time

37. Zack – Kazakhstan; U.S. Citizen; H-4; Male; 31; 14; More than 5 years; Married; USA; White; Russian; Not practicing, evangelical; Lower Middle Class; Bachelor's; Undergraduate; Both; Business Administration; Full-Time

38. Zayden – Burkina Faso; U.S. Citizen; F-1; Male; 31; 22; More than 5 years; Married; American; Black; African; Catholic; Upper Middle Class; Bachelor's; Undergraduate; Public; Business Administration; Full-Time
### Table E.20

**Student Participants: Reasons for Pursuing an F-1 Status: Pull/ Push Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pull Factors</th>
<th>Push Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To learn English</td>
<td>Being very poor/ Poverty in home country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country’s geographic proximity</td>
<td>Economic instability in home country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To experience the U.S. culture</td>
<td>Being a religious minority in home country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make money/ To get a job in the United States/ Make money and send it back home</td>
<td>Being an ethnic minority in home country/ ability to blend in in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To obtain a degree/ To study abroad/ Better education/ Best Higher Education/ Quality Education/ Western education/ U.S. has the best Business education/ U.S. degree being more marketable anywhere in the world</td>
<td>Studying abroad being the only option to obtain a government job because local degrees were not respected/ Lack of educational opportunities in home country/ Major of Interest not being available in home country, but it was offered in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To stay in the United States/ To immigrate/ To test the waters/ United States is easier to come</td>
<td>Political situation and economic crisis in home country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to find a boyfriend and new friends</td>
<td>Being gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of family already living in the U.S.</td>
<td>Being a linguistic minority in home country/ being marginalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed a loved one</td>
<td>Lack of respect for privacy in home country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel/ Exploration/ Adventure/ Have fun</td>
<td>Being Westernized and feeling lack of belonging in home country/ Being conditioned to going to the U.S. since very young age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better economic opportunities/ Economic mobility/ Career</td>
<td>Having grown-up in an International family/ Having gotten used to the cross-cultural environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social mobility</td>
<td>Leaving the country being the only option for economic mobility/ No work opportunities in home country/ The need to find a way to make money to support elderly parents in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse country/ Uniform country/ Simple/ Clean/ Better quality of life</td>
<td>Being bullied at school for looks and having lack of interest from guys/ feeling confident and pretty in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of financial privilege to study abroad</td>
<td>Too spoiled and needed to challenge myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make business connections</td>
<td>Hate towards home country/ To get out/ Get away from home/ Get da hell out of my country/ Home country’s climate being too hot/ Did not want to witness poverty in home country on a daily basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to be independent / not wanting to feel like a big fish in a small pond in home country</td>
<td>Feeling ashamed of not being able to make money in home country despite having a good job and education already</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to an American university in home country/ going to the United States was a logical step</td>
<td>Being labeled as sick by home country community due to eating disorders/ did not want to carry that label anymore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students with the English major went to the United States after college, so I followed the same route</td>
<td>Abusive father, needed to escape/ Tragedy in the family, wanted to move away from that/ Wanted to leave home country because of divorce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table E.21

**Student Participants: External Influencing Factors Leading to an F-1 Status Acquisition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Influencing Factors Leading to an F-1 Status Acquisition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friend’s experience of studying in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ decision/ parents forced/ parents pushed/ parents studied in the United States/ parents wanted to move to the United States/ didn’t want to disappoint parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend(s) already living in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor who lived in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offered a sponsorship of the F-1 visa by a U.S. citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media promoting American culture/ American pop-culture/ Music/ Shows/ United States always on the news/ United States presents itself powerful/ America has a big image/ Watched all those American movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member went to the same school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend went to the same school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member(s) already lived in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School reached out directly and offered full scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International education fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.22

*Student Participants: Job Acquisition Sources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Job Source</strong></th>
<th><strong>Industry</strong></th>
<th><strong>Nature</strong></th>
<th><strong>Type</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Foreign Language Tutor</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Dining Services</td>
<td>Prep Cook</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Dining Services</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Dining Services</td>
<td>Cashier/ Mopping Floors</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Sales/ Retail</td>
<td>Bookstore</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>IS Advising</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Social Media Coordinator</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Ambassador</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>Ambassador</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Insurance Consulting</td>
<td>CPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>IT Helpdesk</td>
<td>CPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Sales/ Retail</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>CPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Senior Care/ Nursing Home</td>
<td>Direct Caregiver</td>
<td>CPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>CPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Investment Fiscal Analysis</td>
<td>CPT/OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Marketing/ Communication</td>
<td>Videographer/ Tutor</td>
<td>CPT/ OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>CPT/ OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Trade Center Associate</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**TOTAL: 22**
**Table E.22 (Continued)**

*Student Participants: Job Acquisition Sources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Source</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>Babysitting</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>Babysitting</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>Babysitting</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>Babysitting</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Pizza Delivery</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Pizza Making</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Waiter/ Server</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Sports Industry</td>
<td>Coaching Kids</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Banking/ Investment</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>CPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Stock Exchange</td>
<td>CPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>CPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Wholesale</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 12</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online/ Craigslist</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>CPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online/ Craigslist</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Equity Research</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online/ Indeed</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
<td>CPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online/ Indeed</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Hotel Receptionist</td>
<td>CPT/ OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online/ Indeed</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
<td>CPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online/ LinkedIn</td>
<td>Medical Devices</td>
<td>Marketing Research/ Analytics</td>
<td>OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online/ LinkedIn</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 10</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>CPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Media/ Communications</td>
<td>Research/ Writing</td>
<td>CPT/OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Solar/ Engineering</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>CPT/ OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Foreign Language Tutor</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Peer Advisor</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Media/ Communications</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Media/ Communications</td>
<td>Free Agent</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
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<td>Networking</td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>Coaching Kids</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>TOTAL: 9</strong></td>
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Table E.22 (Continued)

*Student Participants: Job Acquisition Sources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Source</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk-In</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Bartender/Waiter</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-In</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-In</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Pizza Preparation</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-In</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Selling chocolates</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-In</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-In</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Waiter/Server</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-In</td>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
<td>CPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-In</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Pizza Delivery</td>
<td>CPT/OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>GA/RA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>GA/RA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Research/Teaching</td>
<td>GA/RA/TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Research/Teaching</td>
<td>GA/RA/TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Research/Teaching</td>
<td>GA/RA/TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>GA/TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 6</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>CPT/OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
<td>GA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>IT Helpdesk</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Environmental Sustainability</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 6</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing Agency</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>CPT/OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing Agency</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>CPT/OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing Agency</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Business/Finance/Admin</td>
<td>OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing Agency</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 4</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Direct Referral</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>CPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Referral</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Referral</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Waiter/Server</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Countrymen</td>
<td>Postal/Shipping</td>
<td>Packaging</td>
<td>OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Countrymen</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Painting/Stone work</td>
<td>Under/Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>82 jobs (100%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.23

*Stakeholder Participants: Country of Birth by Geographic Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>68%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>13.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Cote D’Ivoire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>9%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>4.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>4.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 geographic regions</strong></td>
<td><strong>10 countries</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table E.24

*Female Stakeholder Participants: Country of Birth by Geographic Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57% VS 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7% VS 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>64% VS 40%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7% VS 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7% VS 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7% VS 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>21% VS 14%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7% VS 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>7% VS 4.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7% VS 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>7% VS 4.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*4 geographic regions 7 countries 14 (14=100%) VS (22=100%)*

### Table E.25

*Male Stakeholder Participants: Country of Birth by Geographic Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5% VS 22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5% VS 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>75% VS 28%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Cote D’Ivoire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5% VS 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5% VS 4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>25% VS 9%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>(8 = 100%) VS (22=100%)</strong></td>
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</table>
Table E.26

*Stakeholder Participants: Ethnic Descent with Respondents’ Answers on Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Descent (Researcher Assigned Category)</th>
<th>Respondent’s Answer</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>European (Abbreviated)</td>
<td>Greek, Italian, Irish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White (German/Scottish)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maori/Pakeha</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American (Polish/Russian)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American (English/Irish)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irish American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irish and Scot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukrainian and Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italian and Romanian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td>68%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Latin</td>
<td>Colombian-American</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guatemalan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Puerto-Rican, British, German</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French, Cape</td>
<td>Verdean, Portuguese, Ivorian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexican and Japanese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>Sierra Leonian/ Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 ethnic descents</td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

389
Table E.27

*Stakeholder Participants: Relation to F-1 Student by Entity, Relation Category, and Title*

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Int. Stu. Advisor</td>
<td>IS Advisor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IS &amp; Scholar Advisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Advisor to ISs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dean of Int. Affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IS Pathway Program Advisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IS Service Specialist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IS Admissions Counselor/ Advisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IS Programming Specialist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Therapist/Professor</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL Teacher</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-HEI</td>
<td>ESL School</td>
<td>Director of HR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Academic Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>Peer Student</td>
<td>Fellow Student</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table E.28

**Stakeholder Participants: DSO/ PDSO Experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation to F-1 Students</th>
<th>DSO/ PDSO Experience</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student and Scholar Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advisor to International Students</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean of International Student Affairs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Pathway Program Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Services Specialist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Students Admissions Counselor and Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Human Resources at an ESL School</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Students External Service Provider</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapist serving undergraduate international students/ Professor teaching graduate courses to international students</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Counselor/ Academic Advisor for Chinese boarding students at U.S. High Schools</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Instructor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Programming Specialist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Graduate Student (American) in a program where most of the students are international</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow International Student who never needed an F-1 visa because they are a U.S. permanent resident</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.29

Stakeholder Participants: Main Focus of Involvement + Relation to F-I Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Focus/ Nature of Involvement</th>
<th>Relation to F-I Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>International Student Pathway Program Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>Academic Advisor for International Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>College Counselor/ Academic Advisor for Chinese boarding students at U.S. High Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising, Immigration, and Financial Advising; Conduct Issues, Programming</td>
<td>Dean of International Student Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>International Students Admissions Counselor and Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions, Immigration Advising, and Programming</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Advising</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Advising</td>
<td>International Student Services Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Advising</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Advising and Programming</td>
<td>International Student and Scholar Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Advising and Programming</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Advising and Programming</td>
<td>International Student and Scholar Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming</td>
<td>International Student Programming Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Immigration Advising</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching ESL</td>
<td>ESL Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>International Students External Service Provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>International Students External Service Provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Counseling and Teaching Graduate Courses</td>
<td>Therapist serving undergraduate international students/ Professor teaching graduate courses to international students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship</td>
<td>Director of Human Resources at a private ESL School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Student/ Peer</td>
<td>Fellow international student, but who has never been on an F-1 visa, since they are a U.S. permanent resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Student/ Peer</td>
<td>Fellow Graduate Student (American) in a Program where most of the students are international</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.30

Stakeholder Participants: Institution/ Organization, Type, and Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution/ Org</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public HEI</strong></td>
<td>Research University</td>
<td>Northeast/ New England</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research University</td>
<td>Northeast/ Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research University</td>
<td>Midwest/ East North Central</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research University</td>
<td>South/ South Atlantic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>Northeast/ New England</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private HEI</strong></td>
<td>Research University</td>
<td>Northeast/ New England</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research University</td>
<td>South/ South Atlantic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-y Liberal Arts College</td>
<td>Northeast/ New England</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-y Liberal Arts College</td>
<td>Midwest/ East North Central</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All-Women’s Institution</td>
<td>Northeast/ New England</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music-Focus</td>
<td>Northeast/ New England</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tech/ Engineering</td>
<td>Northeast/ New England</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>ESL School</td>
<td>Northeast/ New England</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Northeast/ New England</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boarding High School</td>
<td>Midwest/ East North Central</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table E.31

**Stakeholder Sample: Sorted in Alphabetical Order by Pseudonyms and Aligned with Related Demographic Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ps/nym</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>I/G</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Relation to F-1 Students</th>
<th>DSO</th>
<th>Main Focus of Involvement</th>
<th>Institution/ Organization + (Geo Region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Polish and Russian</td>
<td>Int'l Student Pathway Program Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>Private HEI - R/U (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adel</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Immigration Advising</td>
<td>Public HEI - R/U (Northeast/Mid-Atlantic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>Int'l Student Admissions Counselor/Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Private HEI - Music (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>English/Irish</td>
<td>Int'l Student External Service Provider</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Private Business (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dee</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Italian, Romanian</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Immigration Advising</td>
<td>Private HEI - Technology (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Puerto Rican, British, German</td>
<td>International Student Services Specialist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Immigration Advising</td>
<td>Private HEI - R/U (South/South Atlantic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1GI</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>International Student and Scholar Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Immigration Advising, Programming</td>
<td>Private HEI - R/U (South/South Atlantic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jambo</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>1GI</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Sierra Leonese</td>
<td>Fellow Int'l Student/ Green Card Holder</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>Private HEI - R/U (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Irish and Scot</td>
<td>Advisor, Chinese Boarding Students</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>Boarding High School (Midwest/East North Central)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>N/Im</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>Public HEI - R/U (Northeast/Mid-Atlantic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jusamby</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1GI</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Maori/Pakeha</td>
<td>Therapist-UG IS/ Professor-GR IS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>M/H Counselor/ Teacher</td>
<td>Private HEI - All Women's (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Irish American</td>
<td>Int'l Student External Service Provider</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Private Business (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenny</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1GI</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mexican-Japanese</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Admissions, Imm. Advising, Programming</td>
<td>Public HEI - CC (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libby</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>German/Scottish</td>
<td>International Student Programming Specialist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Programming</td>
<td>Private HEI - R/U (Midwest/East North Central)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1GA</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>Academic Advisor to International Students</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>Public HEI - R/U (Midwest/East North Central)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogelio</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1GA</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>Fellow American Student</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>Private HEI - R/U (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronda</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>International Student Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Teaching, Immigration Advising</td>
<td>Private HEI - R/U (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophia</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>1GI</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ukrainian, Russian</td>
<td>HR Director/ Former Int'l Student Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mentorshp</td>
<td>Private ESL School (Northeast/New England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivien</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>1GI</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>International Student and Scholar Advisor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Immigration Advising, Programming</td>
<td>Public HEI - R/U (Northeast/Mid-Atlantic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ximena</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>HGA</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Greek, Italian, Irish</td>
<td>ESL Instructor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teaching ESL</td>
<td>Private HEI - Liberal Arts (Northeast/Mid-Atlantic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yomar</td>
<td>Cote d'Ivoire</td>
<td>1GI</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>French, C. Verd, Portuguese, Ivorian</td>
<td>Dean of International Student Affairs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Aca, Imm, Fin Advising; Conduct; Programming</td>
<td>Private HEI - Liberal Arts (Midwest/East North Central)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive List for the above Table E.31

Stakeholder Sample: 22 Stakeholder Participants Listed in Alphabetical Order by Their Pseudonym and Followed by Related Demographic Data – Country of Birth; Immigrant Generation; Age; Gender; Ethnicity/Ancestry; Relation To F-1 Students; DSO/ PDSO Experience; Main Focus of Involvement, and Institution/ Organization Type with its Geographic Location.

1. **Abby** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 28; Female; American with Polish and Russian decent; International Student Pathway Program Advisor; Yes; Academic Advising; Private HEI – Research University (Northeast/New England)

2. **Adel** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 52; Female; German; International Student Advisor; Yes; Immigration Advising; Public HEI – Research University (Northeast/Mid-Atlantic)

3. **Bob** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 31; Male; Mixed European; International Student Admissions Counselor and Advisor; Yes; Admissions; Private HEI – Music Focus (Northeast/New England)

4. **Caleb** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 29; Male; American, English, Irish; International Student External Service Provider/ Sales Manager at a For-Profit Business predominately serving international students; No; Sales; Private Business (Northeast/New England)

5. **Dee** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 44; Female; Italian and Romanian; International Student Advisor; Yes; Immigration Advising; Private HEI – Technological Design and Engineering Focus (Northeast/New England)

6. **Eva** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 35; Female; Puerto Rican, British, and German; International Student Services Specialist; Yes; Immigration Advising; Private HEI – Research University (South/South Atlantic)

7. **Fiona** – Bulgaria; 1st-gen Immigrant; 37; Female; Bulgarian; International Student and Scholar Advisor; Yes; Immigration Advising and Programming; Public HEI – Research University (South/South Atlantic)

8. **Jambo** – Sierra Leone; 1st-gen Immigrant; 46; Male; Sierra Leonean/ Black; Fellow International Student, but who has never been on an F-1 visa, since they are a U.S. permanent resident; No; Peer; Public HEI – Research University (Northeast/New England)

9. **Jason** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 42; Male; Irish and Scot; College Counselor/ Academic Advisor for Chinese boarding students at a U.S. High School; No; Academic Advising; Boarding High School (Midwest/East North Central)
10. **Jazz** – Germany; Nonimmigrant visa; 32; Female; German; International Student Advisor; No; Academic Advising; Public HEI – Research University (Northeast/Mid-Atlantic)

11. **Jusamby** – New Zealand; 1st-gen Immigrant; 50; Female; Maori/Pakeha; Therapist serving undergraduate international students/ Professor teaching graduate courses to international students; Mental Health Counselor and Teacher of Graduate Classes; Private HEI - All Women's Institution (Northeast/New England)

12. **Kevin** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 30; Male; Irish American; International Student External Service Provider/ Co-Founder of a For-Profit Business predominately serving international students; No; Sales; Private Business (Northeast/New England)

13. **Lenny** – Mexico; 1st-gen Immigrant; 46; Male; Mexican-Japanese; International Student Advisor; Yes; Admissions, Immigration Advising, and Programming; Public HEI – Community College (Northeast/New England)

14. **Libby** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 23; Female; German/Scottish ancestry; International Student Programming Specialist; No; Programming; Public HEI – Research University (Midwest/East North Central)

15. **Lola** – USA; 1st-gen American; 39; Female; Mexican; Academic Advisor to International Students; Yes; Academic Advising; Public HEI – Research University (Midwest/East North Central)

16. **Rogelio** – USA; 1st-gen American; 34; Male; Colombian-American; Fellow American Student; No; Peer; Public HEI – Research University (Northeast/New England)

17. **Ronda** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 31; Female; Irish; International Student Advisor; Yes; Teaching and Immigration Advising; Private HEI – Research University (Northeast/New England)

18. **Sandra** – Guatemala; 1st-gen Immigrant; 45; Female; Guatemalan; International Student Advisor; Yes; Immigration Advising and Programming; Public HEI – Community College (Northeast/New England)

19. **Sophia** – Ukraine; 1st-gen Immigrant; 33; Female; Russian/Ukrainian; Director of Human Resources at an English as a Second Language School/ Former International Student Advisor/ Former International Student in the U.S.; Yes; Mentorship; Private ESL School (Northeast/New England)

20. **Vivien** – Uzbekistan; 1st-gen Immigrant; 50; Female; Russian; International Student and Scholar Advisor/ Former International Student in the U.S.; Yes; Immigration Advising and Programming; Public HEI – Research University (Northeast/Mid-Atlantic)
21. **Ximena** – USA; Higher-Generation American; 37; Female; Greek, Italian & Irish; English as a Second Language Instructor; No; Teaching English as a Second Language; Private HEI - Liberal Arts (Northeast/Mid-Atlantic)

22. **Yomar** – Cote D’Ivoire; 1st-gen Immigrant; 45; Male; French, Cape Verdean, Portuguese, Ivorian, now U.S. citizen; Dean of International Student Affairs; Yes; Academic, Immigration, and Financial advising; Conduct Issues, Programming; Private HEI - Liberal Arts (Midwest/East North Central)
Table E.32

*Stakeholder Participants: Influence of Stakeholders’ Identities on Their Attitudes Towards F-1 students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Aspect</th>
<th>Attitude/ Impact on Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation Immigrant</td>
<td>More Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former International Student in the U.S.</td>
<td>Empathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former International Student in a Different Country/ Study Abroad</td>
<td>Ability to Relate; First-Hand Understanding; desire to give back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation American</td>
<td>More Compassionate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-Generation American</td>
<td>Assuming the Role of a Cultural Mentor; Being an Ambassador for the U.S.; White Privilege Awareness; Continuous Development of Intercultural Skills; Deep Respect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table E.33

*Stakeholder Participants: Unfair Treatment of International Students at Work: Characteristics of Negative Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Unfair Treatment at Work Experienced by International Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not paid for what they are supposed to/ underpaid/ paid less than their U.S. counterparts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going through all the loop and hoop to be able to work as an international student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overworked/ doing extra tasks that international students are not responsible for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working under the table/ working when not supposed to/ work under the table opening the possibility for abuse/ sexual harassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion from certain work activities/ not feeling fully engaged in a workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not given equal access to information about their rights as employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatient supervisors/ difficult experience due to maltreatment by supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fired without notice/ fired for taking sick days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denied a job due to nonimmigrant status/ struggle because the policies are not realistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not hiring international students because the process is complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promising H-1B sponsorship and then never doing it/ denying an H-1B visa sponsorship due to complexity/ not selecting international students for positions because companies do not know how or want to sponsor the H-1B visa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.34

Stakeholder Participants: International Students VS In-State Domestic Students: Admission to Public Universities. Who Should be Prioritized?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro International Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students should be accepted based upon their capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be no obligation for public institutions to prioritize U.S. citizens in admissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students should have the right to educational opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional revenue generated by international students contributes to the universities being able to accommodate more U.S. students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students contribute perspectives which ultimately benefit U.S. students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An application to university should be merit-based, not based on nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions decisions should be made without regard to a student’s ability to pay or national origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities should accept whomever they deem qualified regardless of the expected family contribution, race, and country of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a university has a particular quota they want to meet, such as enrolling a more globally diverse student body, which would positively impact the campus community as a whole, then the decision is fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If it’s an open market, then most qualified students should get the place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If universities want to make more money to give more scholarship to U.S. citizens, then it is fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro Domestic Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If the decision to admit international students is made for purely financial purposes, it isn't fair to the domestic students who were not accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some considerations should be given to U.S. students from systemically deprived backgrounds, and the fees of international students should support such groups of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not good when international students are prioritized over Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public universities should prioritize U.S. citizens, as they are funded by U.S. taxpayers, that is why it would be unfair to prefer foreigners, even with double tuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public universities’ primary motivation should not be to gain more money through tuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not fair for any institution to decline U.S. citizens just because they want to increase their revenue as a result of the out-of-state tuition that international students pay at public universities and colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A state-run college should maintain a certain percentage of students from that state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public universities are funded by taxpayers. If a state university is almost entirely populated by international students, there would be a public outrage about their tax dollars being used to help fund the education of international students as opposed to U.S. students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It Depends/ Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s complicated and different at each institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring that both populations of students are represented in each accepted class would be ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a delicate balance to be struck between accepting the most qualified candidates and ensuring that recruitment and admission efforts support diversity and inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to pay full tuition will always prove to be a massive advantage in the eyes of admissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most public universities will always need to accept a certain amount of in-state/out-of-state U.S. citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College is not for everyone. U.S. needs to bring back vocational training that students can opt for instead of a college degree where the majority of U.S. students leave with a lot of debt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
F. FIGURES

Figure 1

*Human Capability Theory in Application to International F-1 Students Who Want to Work in the United States*
Figure 2

The Forbidden Fruit: Neoliberal Perspective on International F-1 Students and the U.S. Labor Market
Figure 3

Student Participants: Geographic Regions Representation

Student Participants: World Regions

- **Asia**: 37%
- **Africa**: 16%
- **Europe**: 16%
- **Eurasia**: 13%
- **South America**: 16%
- **North America**: 2%
- **Oceania**: 0%
Figure 4

Student Participants: Current Immigration Status

![Graph showing current immigration status of student participants.]

- F-1: 35%
- Green Card: 30%
- U.S. Citizen: 25%
- H-1B: 15%
Figure 5

*Student Participants: Entry Visa VS Current Immigration Status*

**F-1 Entrants VS Current Immigration Status**
- Green Card
- H-1B
- U.S. Citizen
- F-1

**J-1 Entrants VS Current Immigration Status**
- U.S. Citizen
- Green Card
- J-1

**B1/B2 Entrants VS Current Immigration Status**
- Green Card
- B1/B2

**H-4 Entrant VS Current Immigration Status**
- U.S. Citizen
- H-4
Figure 6

*Student Participants: Race*

**Student Participants: Race**

- White 42%
- Asian 16%
- Other 24%
- Black 13%
- 2 or More Races 5%

Figure 7

*Student Participants: Family’s Socio-Economic Background*

**Student Participants: Family’s Socio-Economic Status**

- Working Class 24%
- Lower Middle Class 18%
- B/W LMC and UMC 5%
- Upper Middle Class 50%
- Upper Class 3%
Figure 8

Student Participants: Field of Study

Student Participants: Field of Study
- Business: 55%
- STEM: 19%
- Humanities: 26%
Figure 9

Merton’s Typology of Adaptation Models in Application to F-1 Students: Which Exit Do I Take? (International Student)
Figure 10

*Stakeholder Participants: Contributing Factors of F-1 Students’ Feeling of Exclusion*

The Spiderweb of Exclusion

- U.S. Political Climate/ Immigration Policies
- Employment Restrictions
- Nonimmigrant Temporality
- School Type/ Location
- Ethnic Discrimination/ Cultural Differences
- Individual Circumstances
- Pressure to Succeed/ Family
- Lack of Empathy from the U.S. Community Members
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