

© *Journal of International Students*  
Volume 12, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 955-972  
ISSN: 2162-3104 (Print), 2166-3750 (Online)  
<https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v12i4.3829>  
[ojed.org/jis](http://ojed.org/jis)

## Understanding Post-Graduation Decision of Caribbean International Students to Remain in the United States

Trevis Belle  
Susan Barclay  
Thomas Bruick  
Phillip Bailey

*University of Central Arkansas, USA*

### ABSTRACT

We utilized Schlossberg's transition theory (1984) as the framework for understanding how international students from the Caribbean arrive at the decision to remain within the United States after completing their highest earned degree and joining the diaspora. Using a phenomenological research design with a sample of six international students who remained within the United States after completing their highest earned degree, we examined the underlying considerations participants made during their decision-making process. Results revealed that all six participants relied on economic, political, and social considerations, which contributed to their decision to remain in the United States.

**Keywords:** brain drain, Caribbean, international students, transition

---

Brain drain relates mainly to the migration of high professionals, such as engineers, physicians, scientists, IT personnel, and others who tend to have gained a university education. Javed et al. (2019) defined *brain drain* as the global migration of human capital assets from one area of the world to another, specifically the migration of educated individuals from developing countries to developed ones. Johnson (2009) discussed the

consequences of brain drain as the unequal distribution of advantages and disadvantages of global migration, where the source country bears most of the losses (e.g., skilled labor, intellect) and, in Johnson's estimation, has yet to be compensated adequately for the net contributions their natives have made to the hosting countries. For the purpose of this article, skilled labor and intellect refers to individuals who are native to the Caribbean regions, moved to the United States to pursue higher education, and remained after completing their highest earned degree.

According to the Migration Policy Institute (2020), in the school year 2017–2018, 11,300 Caribbean students were enrolled in U.S. higher educational institutions, representing 1% of the total 1.1 million international students. Once international students complete their studies within the United States, they are faced with the decision of either staying or returning to their home country. The brain drain phenomenon intensifies once the international student chooses the former, which increases the negative impact on the source country.

In this study, the source country or region refers to the Caribbean and the host country refers to the United States. Much of the academic efficacy and performance information about our population of interest is anecdotal and generalized. Edwards-Joseph and Baker (2014) indicated that students who grew up in the Caribbean bring a strong sense of academic efficacy with them to U.S. universities. With this strong sense of academic efficacy, we were interested to see how their experiences contributed to their desire to remain within the United States. Our purpose was to gain greater understanding as to how international students from the Caribbean arrive at the decision to remain within the United States after attaining their highest degree.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **International Students in the United States**

International students who are studying in the United States contribute significantly to higher education, not only financially but also culturally, in terms of facilitating the development of intercultural competencies among all students and influencing the institution's internationalization efforts in positive ways (Urban & Palmer, 2014). Fostering meaningful engagement of international students with the rest of the university community, integrating intercultural perspectives into classrooms, and encouraging domestic students to operate in multicultural groups and teams can enhance the student experience and complement institutional recruitment and retention strategies (Urban & Palmer, 2014). In addition to the social and cultural contributions international students

make to their institutions, they also help create jobs and add invaluable scientific innovation and technological improvements to the local community (Academic Credentials Evaluation Institute, 2017). With the plethora of contributions international students make to higher education settings, understanding their importance within the field is imperative for student affairs professionals because it will inform the work they do as it relates to serving this student population.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Student affairs professionals can use Schlossberg's transition theory (1984) in the work they perform with international students. According to Schlossberg (1984), transition is viewed as a change in behavior or relations in response to an event or nonevent that affects one's beliefs about oneself or the world.

A major focus of Schlossberg's transition theory is on how students are *moving in*, *moving through*, and *moving out* of their transition, while also focusing on the individual and how that individual maneuvers their journey with the implementation of the four Ss (situation, self, support, and strategy). Kim (2012) stated that attending college is a critical time of transition in the life of a student. It signals the beginning of one's independence, because many students live away from home for the first time. It marks a transition to the assumption of adult responsibilities and serves as a time of reflection, when students begin to explore where they will fit into the world and what their future career will be.

### **Support for International Students**

Departments, such as International Student Services, are put in place to provide support to the international student population as they move into university, move through university, and move out. The experiences international students have with those who work in such departments can contribute to their remaining within the United States. Likewise, student affairs professionals who work within Housing and Residence Life (HRL) play an important role in the process international students undergo as they arrive at their decision to remain within the United States postgraduation. This is because HRL staff assist the students in becoming acclimated to the institution through programming efforts and by recommending campus resources that aid in their professional and personal development. International students take all factors of their experiences into consideration while assessing their decision to remain after graduation. Ammigan (2019) reinforced the argument that support provided outside the academic setting, such as tutoring, study skills, career advice,

counseling services, library resources, and physical space for learning, can be equally important to maintaining academic satisfaction and success on campus. All these interactions also come into play when the international student is determining whether to remain within the United States. Student affairs professionals might not understand the significance, but their actions and engagement with international students have a strong influence on how international students arrive at the decision of staying in the United States or returning to their home country or region.

### **Factors Influencing International Students' Decision to Remain in the United States**

International students tend to consider certain factors in arriving at their decision to remain within the United States after completing their highest degree. Political, economic, and social conditions are cited frequently as factors pushing students to leave their home country (Altbach, 2004; Carr et al., 2005; Han & Appelbaum, 2016; Lee & Kim, 2010; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). These conditions can include lack of access to education and jobs, as well as concerns about political repression and academic freedom (Altbach, 2004). In most developing countries, access to higher education is still restricted, compared with high income countries, leading to reinforcement of existing social stratification (Dassin et al., 2014). As it pertains to economic factors, many students study abroad with the goal of staying in their host country to work and build a career, which makes the United States, with its large and diverse economy and high salaries, attractive (Altbach, 2004). Altbach (2004) stated that students seek education abroad because their home country's higher education systems lack space and a "world-class" (p. 21) reputation. This aligns with a perception that overseas education is better than local education (Li & Bray, 2007). Pertaining to political factors, students from some countries study abroad to escape political repression at home or to gain academic freedom (Altbach, 2004). They are looking for a congenial socioeconomic and political environment (Li & Bray, 2007). Finally, research has indicated that with social factors, the adjustment process for students can be a predictor of students' intent to stay in the host country (Baruch et al., 2007). During the adjustment process, students must choose how to balance their home culture with the host culture (Carr et al., 2005). This can be affected by support systems at the university and ties to family members in the host country.

### **METHOD**

This study originated from a midsize public university in the southern

United States. The institution classifies an international student as a nonresident alien entering the United States on an F-1 or J-1 visa. Participants for this study were not enrolled students at the institution; rather, they had been students at various higher education institutions in the United States.

### **Sample and Procedure**

Participants were six international students who had studied and remained in the United States after graduating with their highest earned degree. All participants were from various Caribbean countries. This was critical as we wanted to focus on developing countries within the Caribbean region, which is an underrepresented area in the literature, and also which is an international student population that pursues higher education degrees within the United States. The average age of participants was 28.67 years. Table 1 provides additional participant demographic information.

**Table 1**  
*Participant Demographics*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>Highest degree earned</b>
Participant 1	22	Female	St. Kitts & Nevis	Bachelors
Participant 2	34	Female	The Bahamas	Masters
Participant 3	33	Female	Jamaica	Doctorate
Participant 4	26	Male	Trinidad & Tobago	Bachelors
Participant 5	25	Male	St. Kitts & Nevis	Bachelors
Participant 6	32	Male	Trinidad & Tobago	Bachelors

After securing Institutional Review Board approval, we recruited participants from various institutions where Caribbean student organizations and alumni groups are present and were able to get individuals who remained within the United States after attaining their highest earned degree. We used snowball sampling to recruit participants who met the criteria for the study, which was that they were an international student from the Caribbean who remained within the United States after attaining their highest earned degree.

### **Data Collection**

The first author scheduled semistructured interviews with each of the six participants. This semistructured protocol allows for researcher

flexibility in the interview process and gives room for the “researcher to respond to the situation at hand” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Participants received the questions prior to their scheduled interview so they were aware of the questions the researcher would ask. Due to both the widespread geographical location of participants and COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews took place via the Zoom video conferencing platform. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a better understanding of how participants had arrived at their decision to remain in the United States, rather than returning to their homes, after completing their highest earned degree. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour, and each was recorded with participant consent. To increase credibility and trustworthiness of the data collection process, the first author engaged in prolonged engagement (e.g., building rapport with participants), persistent observation (e.g., attention to participant emotions), and reflexivity (e.g., awareness of his own values, background, and experience with the topic under study). In addition, the first author engaged in a reflection memo bracketing technique prior to the beginning of our research. Gearing (2004) explained bracketing as a “scientific process in which a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous experiences to see and describe the phenomenon” (p. 1430). As an international student who elected to remain in the United States after graduating with his bachelor’s degree, the first author recognized the importance of examining his own experiences with, and perspectives on, the topic under investigation. Reflections continued throughout the data analysis process.

### **Data Analysis**

At the conclusion of participant interviews, three of the four authors engaged in transcendental phenomenological data analysis. Transcendental phenomenology analysis focuses on one’s ability to delve deeply into consciousness and uncover the underlying structures of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Merriam and Tisdell (2009) described phenomenology data analysis as the process of “focusing on experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness” (pp. 25–26). We selected this approach because we wanted to focus and gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the individuals as they navigated through their processes. Through the data analysis process, the first author engaged in bracketing, as well, to ensure his biases and assumptions were not a deciding factor in the way the data was coded.

We coded the data manually utilizing the inductive coding process. We broke the qualitative data set into smaller samples. We created codes for those samples and continued the process breaking the data into smaller

samples and applying codes until we had coded all the data. After analyzing the data and summarizing the themes that emerged, we engaged in member checking procedures that provided participants the opportunity to validate whether we had interpreted the data accurately.

## RESULTS

All themes that emerged from the data aligned with factors aligned with earlier research. Those factors were economic, social, and political. We provide examples of those themes from our research in the following subsections.

**Table 2**

*Themes and Subthemes from the Data Analysis*

<b>Main theme</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of jobs and expectations of receiving low salaries</li></ul>
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social injustices against different marginalized communities</li><li>• Lack of accountability and urgency from the government</li></ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full feeling of freedom and liberation</li><li>• Support from close friends</li></ul>

### **Economic Factors**

All participants emphasized that the lack of job opportunities and the expectation of receiving low salaries within their home country contributed to their decision to remain within the United States postgraduation as opposed to returning to their home country. One participant offered:

A change in what I want to do... I wanted to work in social security back home, but while in college I decided I wanted to be a professor instead. That's not really an option back home, outside of the community colleges, there aren't many other opportunities. I know a lot of people have an unfortunate experience where, you know, they go off and they study and then they go back home.... then nobody wants to hire them because they're like, well, you're overqualified, and we can't afford to pay. I'm like, well, no, you just haven't tried yet. (Participant 5)

The lack of job opportunities was evident further in the narrative of additional participants as a main reason for remaining within the United States as opposed to going home. For example, Participant 1, a 22-year-old from St. Kitts and Nevis, shared that the career opportunities back home were not the same as they are in the United States and that people expect graduates to enter a traditional profession, such as a teacher, lawyer, or doctor. Knowing this was the stereotypical mindset of those in her home region, she decided to pursue and explore the abundant opportunities available in the United States because she did not want to limit herself in her home region.

Lower salaries for jobs in their home countries was a prime factor influencing students' decision to remain in the United States postgraduation. In particular, four participants emphasized how receiving more money for their job in the United States actually assists them to live a better life:

So, I can make more money here. And as a result, I can think about sending my brothers to school, taking care of my family back home, sending extra money back home to, like, people in the community, all of that, like, I don't, I'm not yet at the stage where I can see myself making enough to do all that in Jamaica, if I were working in Jamaica, and I can definitely do that here. Also, there weren't, there aren't very many labs, where people are doing bench science research, and it just seems like I wouldn't be able to get a stable, reasonable income with just a bachelor's degree. So that made me decide to pursue higher education, even higher education and get the PhD with the understanding that with a PhD, I could at least go home or maybe continue to travel and get more research experience under my belt, and that, then, I could take that back home and, perhaps, get a professor position. (Participant 3)

Similarly, others discussed low salary expectations due to the inability of companies in their home regions to compensate them properly for their level of education or their expertise. For example, Participant 2, a 34-year-old from the Bahamas with a master's degree, stated she was receiving triple the amount of salary for her current job in the United States than she would have received in the Bahamas, especially given the fact that the exchange rate is 1:1. She knew she would never be able to receive that amount of pay in the Bahamas no matter how hard she tried. Finally, some participants stated the profession in which they earned their degree was not present in their home country so they would not be able to receive even the expected base pay for their degree area of knowledge.



### **Political Factors**

Three participants spoke about some political factors that influenced their decision to remain within the United States post completion of their highest degree, as opposed to returning home. For example, three participants emphasized that social injustices against different marginalized communities within their home countries played heavily into their decision to remain in the United States. One participant commented,

I know one thing for me was LGBTQ rights, like, in the Caribbean, it's still very taboo, and, like, my philosophy and thinking of those types of things have changed, as opposed to, like, some of my friends who I grew up with when I went to high school, etc. Like, their way of thinking, it's different... And I don't know if I can go back to a society full time where, like, not everyone has those types of rights and stuff like that. (Participant 6)

Other participants mentioned similar narratives about the issues and challenges members of various marginalized groups face in the home region of participants. Participant 3, who was from Jamaica, where a reputation of condemning same sex relationships is evident through some of its local artists' music, spoke about the existence of some views within her childhood community with which she was uncomfortable and how some of the conversations people engage in are violently homophobic. Likewise, Participant 1 expressed her appreciation for laws being in place in the United States that protect people from those types of injustices.

Three participants alluded to the lack of accountability and urgency from the government in following up on the completion of projects and communicating with students studying abroad who want to return home. Participant 4, who is from Trinidad and Tobago, stated:

So there are instances where you have projects, millions of dollars spent on projects, they reach 90% completion, 95% completion, but when the government changes, so say the opposition wins the election, and they take over, they will discontinue projects that are 90%–95% complete, just because it was started by the other party, and they don't want the other party to look credible or look like they did something good. I'm seeing it right now because I'm at the Ministry of Education and we deal with maintenance and repairs and construction and new schools and stuff, and there are schools that are fairly recently built, 2015

or 2014, just a few years and these schools were at 95% completion and when you go to these schools, I have pictures, if you see the conditions of these schools are inhabitable and have overgrown vines and bushes all over.

Similarly, the narratives of other participants highlighted their experiences with inefficient and lackluster communication from officials within government organizations, especially given the fact participants were seeking ways to enhance that particular industry in the country. Participants also believed the government was not taking the high level of crime seriously. For example, Participant 3 described growing up in a crime-ridden neighborhood. She was married, and given that her partner did not come from that type of background and had little experience with high crime areas, she feared immensely for his safety and refused to return to a country with elevated crime.

### **Social Factors**

Several participants highlighted how stifled and trapped they felt within their home countries. Participants described living independent lives in the United States, which allowed them to experience a full feeling of freedom and liberation. This was something they indicated they did not want to risk giving up by returning home. Participant 2 described this well:

The Underground club we used to go there. We took the trains, to... I forget what that area is called, but it's called Underground. And they used to have these singers and stuff like that; they had the best barbecue wings. And we literally stayed up till 6 am in the morning listening to people singing, drinking, eating wings, and go home like nothing happened, and then when I am home in the Bahamas, I can't even do that, like my dad would be like, Miss, you need to be in by 12 o'clock. And I'd be like, look, how old I be, I'm 22, you don't know what you're talking about. Um, it was just a lot more freedom now. You know, like, you can make mistakes, people won't judge you, people aren't minding your business. You know, so I guess my social freedom, if you will, or liberation rather.

Other participants emphasized the differences in social culture between their countries and the United States and what it means to feel free and liberated. For example, Participant 5, hailing from St. Kitts and Nevis, stated that "for one, Americans mind their own business,"

insinuating that people in St. Kitts and Nevis tend to be involved in everyone else's affairs. This participant likened the involvement to a game of telephone, because whatever one does at home tends to get back to other people, as though everyone is relaying the information through telephone calls. However, this participant had greater freedom in the United States from the over involvement from others.

Participant 1 attributed the size of the country to the level of freedom and liberation she could feel. She stated, "I think because Nevis is so small, everybody knows everybody," highlighting that she preferred staying in the United States because there are so many people who do not know you and just continue going along their day.

The support from close friends made throughout their higher education journey within the United States was emphasized by four participants. They indicated they and their friends had been able to build close-knit communities and that these communities served as huge support systems throughout rough times when they felt lonely. Participant 1 articulated this well:

I'm part of a business frat, Alpha Kappa Psi. When it comes to frats and sororities and stuff like that of course, your brothers and sisters, like that you went through something with you know, you just naturally will be close. So, I would actually say those people. So, I feel naturally close to these people and it's just, I think when you build like a family aspect when you're away at school. And you have these people who would do anything for you or vice versa, and because it was like a business frat, we have a lot of connections, we all have roles and all have different companies and organizations. So, if I express well, I don't know where I'm gonna work afterwards, like in terms of sponsorship and whatever. They're like, we're gonna help you do this and this and this and this; it's very encouraging.

Similar to comments from Participant 1, other participants spoke about being able to experience new things, such as carnival and football, with friends they had made within the United States and how those interactions played a big part in supporting their sense of belonging. Participant 2 mentioned that due to some of these relationships, she had even been given the opportunity to serve as a godparent to some of her friends' children. She also mentioned that she had been able to engage in activities with the parents of her godchildren, such as going to museums and clubs, which were things she would not have been able to do back in

the Bahamas. On the other hand, Participant 4 spoke more about how using extracurricular activities, such as soccer, was a way to create those friendships. He mentioned that while in Miami, he was able to meet people from many different cultures, and that in spite of spoken language differences, he still appreciated the moment to develop and connect with someone new.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how international students from the Caribbean arrive at their decision not to return home after completing their highest earned degree within the United States, which leads to a phenomenon known as brain drain. Similar studies have focused on international students from developed countries or leading places of origin, such as China, the United Kingdom, India, South Korea, or Saudi Arabia, for international students in the United States (IIE, 2019). Findings from this research add to the few existing studies that focus on international students from the Caribbean. The results of this study indicate that all six participants tied their decision to remain within the United States after completing their highest earned degree to three factors: economic, social, and political.

These results build upon existing evidence that international students take into deep consideration elements connected to these three categories and, based on those considerations, decide what is important for them to make that decision not to return home (Gensing 2017). As it relates to economic factors, participants spoke primarily to the lack of job opportunities and lower salaries if they were to go home. Participants spoke mainly about the lack or absence of job opportunities in their home regions' labor force, which were representative of the areas in which they had pursued their higher education degree; thus, finding gainful employment would be impossible. Participants believed they would have to find employment in professions for which they had not prepared or would have to create jobs themselves. Most job opportunities in Caribbean regions align with traditional careers pursued by most people in those regions. These include being a doctor, accountant, teacher, or lawyer. Although these occupations hold high prestige and might pay well in the United States, this is not necessarily the case in the Caribbean. Often, students who return to their home countries after studying in the United States return to diminished access to entry-level positions or face a lack of proper compensation for their credentials.

Pertaining to political factors, the lack of governmental protection for marginalized communities within their countries played a strong role in

the participants' decision not to return. Although they did not identify as members of those communities, participants were aware of the narrative that exists among the citizens—a narrative that breeds violence—and the lack of protections afforded the very same citizens the government is elected to serve.

Most participants stated they enjoyed having that sense of freedom and liberation by remaining with the United States. This finding suggests participants experienced more restricted environments in their home regions. Some participants offered that perceived restrictions could be due to the geographical size of the country and the population size; thus, those participants were not able to do certain things or enjoy certain activities without being scrutinized and judged by either their family, peers, or strangers and without others sharing information with people they both knew. Participants stated they were able to do things in the United States without judgment because they were meeting so many different people each day, and that everyone tends to go about their lives without worrying about what the next person will think about what they are doing.

### **Implications**

There are several ways in which the findings of this study inform student affairs practitioners in assisting all international students from the Caribbean with the conflicting ideas of remaining within the United States after attaining their highest earned degree. Mainly, participants in this study shed light on three key factors that played a significant role in their process—economic, political, and social. Participants spoke mostly about issues and challenges directly affecting their individual country of origin; however, it was evident that the issues were similar across the Caribbean.

In accordance with Schlossberg's (1984) description of transition, and highlighting that "transition is viewed as a change in behavior or relations in response to an event or non-event that affects one's beliefs about oneself or the world" (p. 65), these participants went through two transition processes—the first being their transition from their home country into the United States to begin their higher education journey, and the second being their transition out of their higher education institution.

### ***Moving In***

An overarching consideration that emerged from the study was economic reasons, meaning that students believed they would be able to gain better job opportunities within the United States. Upon a student entering the university, student affairs professionals within the International Student Services office can begin developing rapport with

these students. Through the rapport-building process, the staff would be able to find out what considerations went into the students' process that led them to wanting to study abroad. Within these conversations these student affairs professionals, in collaboration with academic advisors, can begin developing a plan (e.g., providing career advice and development through connecting students to careers in the United States and focusing on salary negotiations) for students if they decide to remain within the United States after completing their highest degree.

### ***Moving Through***

Student affairs professionals employed in offices, such as International Student Services, can provide support to international students as they go through their transitions. With social factors, they can ensure that they are recommending students with organizations on campus that fit their interests so that they are able to socialize and develop relationships. Focusing on the economic factor, staff could conduct workshops that focus on tax preparation, financial literacy, improving credit scores, and money management, just to name a few. If international students are interested in exploring the political realm more, professionals in the International Student Services office can connect them to governmental organizations that align with their values and also provide workshops focused on gaining citizenship, applying for Optional Practical Training, and even attaining Social Security cards. These efforts would then translate into international students feeling like they belong due to the extra steps being taken to prepare them for when they transition out of university and work toward remaining within the United States.

### ***Moving Out***

As it relates to economic factors, participants shared that they are unable to return or refuse to return home, because their economic sector does not have space for their interest or work, or institutions are not able to pay them the equivalent of their degree so that they would be able to live comfortably. Politically, participants discussed that government entities are not taking social justice issues seriously and there are no laws in place that protect their citizens who identify as part of an underrepresented community or identity. Socially, participants indicated that at times they would feel trapped and they were not able to do as they pleased or live a life of freedom without ridicule due to individuals spreading information and passing judgment onto them.

Additionally, the universities in which the international students are currently studying and the International Student Services offices can work to build collaborative opportunities with the source countries through

building strategies and creating policies to determine what would entice students to return after their studies

### **Limitations**

This study produced important information in relation to understanding how international students from the Caribbean arrive at the decision to remain within the United States after completing their highest earned degree and that connection to the phenomenon known as brain drain. However, the study is not without limitations.

First, we conducted this research utilizing a phenomenological qualitative approach, and the results of the study cannot be generalized to an entire population (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wolcott, 2005). As someone who is currently living the experience of an individual from the Caribbean who is studying in the United States and facing the decision to remain in the United States or return home, the first author remained aware of the biases and personal views he holds. Although he engaged in bracketing practices to reduce biases, he recognized that his personal experience could have influenced research protocol.

A second limitation was the inability to conduct interviews face to face due to the coronavirus pandemic. Conducting the interviews via Zoom made it more difficult to notice nonverbal cues (e.g., response hesitancy, subtle emotional responses), which are important components to interviews (Ganguly, 2017). In addition, interruption to the flow of conversation is inherent in video telephony platforms due to lags in sound and other features. Further, lags in internet connections tend to add to disruptions or misunderstanding in communication.

Finally, we sought data from participants with varying highest levels of education, so as they progressed through their journey of higher education, participants might have had increased experiences that reinforced their decisions to remain in the United States versus those who at the time of the interview had attained an undergraduate degree more recently. Additionally, given the fact that each participant did not attend the same higher education institution, the services they received and interactions they might have had with people at these institutions plays a role in the portrayal of their experiences.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study focused heavily on the economic, political, and social considerations as to why international students from the Caribbean arrived at the decision to remain within the United States after completing their highest earned degree. Future research might include studying the

psychological effects, such as homesickness and guilt of contributing to the brain effect, of students remaining after completing their studies. Additionally, future work could analyze the perspectives and the work of student affairs professionals in offices such as International Student Services and how they navigate the discussions with international students from the Caribbean who want to remain in the United States after completing their studies. Conducting a cross analysis with the results from this study with other studies that focus on international student populations might be useful. For example, studying the major differences and experiences leading to this population wanting to remain after their studies could be informative. Finally, research could be conducted on the governmental policies and procedures in place in different Caribbean countries to see what benefits or incentives are in place to entice students to return post completion of their studies.

### **CONCLUSION**

The participants in this study emphasized similar experiences regarding the process they undertook toward arriving at the decision to remain within the United States after completing their highest earned degree. In conducting this study, our goal was to provide knowledge that will assist all stakeholders involved in assisting international students from the Caribbean with their transition process in, through, and out of the higher education system within the United States and to understand the role they play in helping international students arrive at the decision to remain within the United States post completion of their highest earned degree. In accordance with Schlossberg's transition theory (1984), the participants' experiences focused heavily on their moving in and moving out aspects, with only brief mention of the moving through. For example, regarding the moving in, prior to participants arriving to the United States, they took into consideration what factors (e.g., economic, political, and social) made them want to come, and as they moved through, the conversations they had with staff and faculty and the relationships that were developed with friends helped reassure them they were making the right decision. As they prepared to move out, these considerations were the determining factors for their remaining within the United States. It is imperative to note that this study contributes to expanding the limited research related to international students from the Caribbean and understanding how they arrive at their decision to remain within the United States. Knowing that this particular international student population is underrepresented within literature, our hope is that this study can serve as a critical foundation for deeper understanding and more intentional efforts aimed toward assisting



international students from the Caribbean in arriving at this decision to the best of their ability.

## REFERENCES

- Altbach, P. G. (2004). Globalisation and the university: Myths and realities in an unequal world. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 10(1), 3–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2004.9967114>
- Ammigan, R. (2019). Institutional satisfaction and recommendation: What really matters to international students? *Journal of International Students*, 9(1), 262–281.
- Bailey, E. K. (2017). ‘I am studying in the U.S. but’: Observations and insights from Caribbean college students. *Social Identities*, 23(1), 87–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2016.1179568>
- Baruch, Y., Budhwar, P. S., & Khatri, N. (2007). Brain drain: Inclination to stay abroad after studies. *Journal of World Business*, 42(1), 99–112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2006.11.004>
- Carr, S. C., Inkson, K., & Thorn, K. (2005). From global careers to talent flow: Reinterpreting ‘brain drain’. *Journal of World Business*, 40(4), 386–398.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Dassin, J., Enders, J., & Kottmann, A. (2014). Social inclusiveness, development, and student mobility in international higher education: The case of the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program. In B. Streitweiser (Ed.), *Internationalisation of higher education and global mobility* (Vol. 23, pp. 73–86). Symposium Books.
- Edwards-Joseph, A., & Baker, S. (2014). Factors Caribbean overseas students perceive influence their academic self-efficacy. *Journal of International Students*, 4(1), 48–59.
- Ganguly, S. (2017). Understanding nonverbal cues: A key to success in interviews. *The IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, 11(2), 62–72.
- Gensing, M. E. (2017). *Student global mobility: An analysis of international STEM student brain drain* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Old Dominion University
- Han, X., Stocking, G., Gebbie, M. A., & Appelbaum, R. P. (2015). Will they stay or will they go? International graduate students and their decisions to stay or leave the U.S. upon graduation. *PLoS ONE*, 10(3). doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0118183
- Hutchinson, D. (2018). *Overlooked and invisible: Student success among first-generation, foreign-born Caribbean Black immigrants* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Nebraska.
- Javed, B., Zainab, B., Zakai, S. N., & Malik, S. (2019). Perceptions of international student mobility: A qualitative case study. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 6(2), 269–287.

- Johnson, N. (2009). Analysis and assessment of the “Brain Drain” phenomenon and its effects on Caribbean countries. *Florida Atlantic Comparative Studies Journal*, 11, 1–16. <https://home.fau.edu/peralta/web/FACS/braindrain.pdf>
- Kim, E. (2012). An alternative theoretical model: Examining psychosocial identity development of international students in the United States. *College Student Journal*, 46(1), 99–113.
- Li, M., & Bray, M. (2007). Cross-border flows of students for higher education: Push-pull factors and motivations of Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong and Macau. *Higher Education*, 53(6), 791–818. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-005-5423-3>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (Vol. 75). SAGE.
- Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G. N. (2002). “Push-pull” factors influencing international student destination choice. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 16(2), 82–90. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540210418403>
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. SAGE.

### **Authors Bios**

**TREVIS BELLE, MS**, is from the twin-island nation of St. Kitts and Nevis in the West Indies. He earned his Master of Science in College Student Personnel Administration in 2021 from the University of Central Arkansas in the United States. His major research interests are international student experiences and student affairs practices. Email: [trevisbelle@gmail.com](mailto:trevisbelle@gmail.com)

**SUSAN R. BARCLAY** is an Associate Professor at the University of Central Arkansas in the Department of Leadership Studies. Her research interests include student development and success, career transitions, use of career construction techniques in multiple settings, identity development, and life design. Email: [srbarclay@uca.edu](mailto:srbarclay@uca.edu)

**THOMAS BRUICK, PhD**, is an Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator for the College Student Personnel Administration program at the University of Central Arkansas in the United States. His research interests include graduation preparation within student affairs, higher education policy, and access. Email: [tbruick@uca.edu](mailto:tbruick@uca.edu)

**PHILLIP BAILEY**, Associate Vice President for International Education and Engagement, is also a tenured Full Professor of French in the Department of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures. Email: [phillipb@uca.edu](mailto:phillipb@uca.edu)