

Understanding Post-study Migration Plans of International Students through the Lens of Family Business Strategies: Evidence from Thailand-to-China Students

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Abstract

International education and onward mobility of international graduates often involve strategies of economic units. This paper contributes to this line of research by examining how post-study migration plans of international students can be geared toward achieving strategic goals of family businesses. Based on survey data among Thais studying in Chinese universities, we find that those with a family business background show a clear intention of short-term sojourn; however, when they are at elite universities or graduate schools, or have ethnic-language links with the host country, chances of leaving immediately upon graduation increase significantly. We argue that their particular mobility patterns may involve business-oriented families' efforts to balance the two strategic goals across borders: succession and internationalization. The present paper calls for a closer look into the particular situations of families to deepen the understanding of international student mobility.

Keywords

International student mobility; post-study migration; family business; internationalization; family strategies

Introduction

International education can be a strategic move of families to address pressing issues to ensure that the whole family can survive and thrive. For instance, Li, Findlay, Jowett and Skeldon (1996) argue that sending children abroad for education is used by some Hong Kong parents as a strategy for protecting their families against the uncertain future associated with the transfer of sovereignty in 1997. Families in Eastern Europe have also been found to use children's international education in the UK as a prelude for later family migration (Marcu, 2015).

These studies linking international student mobility with family strategies are in accordance with the New Economics of Labor Migration theory (Massey et al., 1993; Stark & Bloom, 1985). In contrast to neo-classical approaches that explain migration in differences in income levels between places, the New Economics argue that migration is not a process of seeking higher wages by individuals, instead, sending some members of a given family to work abroad is a strategy for the household to spread risks, accumulate resources, or achieve other economic goals.

As a matter of fact, there is no lacking of examining international student mobility from the perspective of strategies of economic units, which, besides families, can be individuals (Brown

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& Tannock, 2009), intermediary agents (Salt & Stein, 1997), companies (Liu-Farrer, 2009), universities (Altbach & Knight, 2007), and countries (Shachar, 2006).

The present study explores how the strategies of yet another kind of economic unit, the family business (FB), may shape the post-study migration plans of international students, using data collected from Thais pursuing degrees in China. Despite seeming archaic in the contemporary era, FBs are still a dynamic economic component in any economy. In fact, most economies are found to be dominated by FBs (Astrachan & Shanker, 2003; Bhattacharya & Ravikumar, 2001), which contribute more than 70% of the global GDP (Marks, Slee, Bles & Nall, 2012), or more than 80% of non-governmental business activity world-wide (Wooldridge, 2015). In Thailand particularly, many family businesses which were once small businesses eventually burgeoned into powerful business groups, exerting a huge influence on the country's economy (Suehiro & Wailerdsak 2004; Pananond & Zeithaml, 1998). Still, the majority of the family businesses in developing countries such as Thailand overlap with SMEs (Thassanabanjong, Miller & Marchant 2009). The family businesses in Thailand are also characterised by being owned by ethnic Chinese who typically expect their sons to inherit and operate these enterprises (Suehiro & Wailerdsak, 2004).

International education is believed to be of vital importance to FBs (Tsang, 2002; Yeung, 2000). Thus, significant amounts of international students are likely with FB backgrounds. Nevertheless, scant research has been done on their post-study migration trajectories or plans. Among the few studies that touch on this issue, findings are inconsistent (e.g., Marcu, 2015; Lin & Kingminghae, 2017). Thus, dedicated efforts and meticulous research examining the fundamental situations of FBs is warranted to clarify the relationship between FB strategies and the post-overseas-study-migration of their next generation.

In the following parts, we first briefly discuss how the international education of the younger generation may help FBs address two fundamental challenges: succession and internationalization. Next, based on the revised Uppsala Model explaining internationalization of firms, we hypothesize on (1) what is the typical post-study migration plan of those with a FB background: immediate leave? Short-term stay? or long-term stay; and (2) what factors may lead to the immediate leave of those with a FB background. We then introduce our data which come from a recent survey of Thais studying in China, a country that attracts an increasing number of foreign business people and students. After reporting on the findings, the implications and limitations of the study will be discussed.

Succession of FBs, Internationalization of Firms, and International Education as a Solution

While a common definition of what constitutes a family business does not exist, following Tan and Fock (2001), the definition of FB we adopt is that family and business remain and continue together. FBs are typically characterized by members of the same family owning and managing a given business, and both the business and visions of it are expected to be passed on to future family generations (Chrisman, Kellermanns, Chan & Liano, 2010). Particularly, the succession issue is widely believed by researchers to be a major problem facing FBs (see Handler, 1994). In the FB literature on succession, for a person to be considered a suitable successor, human capital including education is the most commonly cited requirement (Schlepphorst & Moog, 2014).

As education is increasingly internationalized, it is only natural for some FBs to send members of the next generation abroad to obtain best education. However, there can be another rationale for those with a FB background to study abroad than successor-grooming: to gain

knowledge of the host country which may lead to successful internationalization. In a globalized world, many firms perceive internationalization as a valuable strategy for organizations' growth and expansion (Graves & Thomas, 2008). While FBs are perceived to last long, they are not usually associated with internationalization or growing outside of national borders (Fernández & Nieto, 2005). Still, to 'manage continuity in change' (Bannò & Sgobbi, 2016), FBs are unlikely to ignore the impact of deepening globalization on the future of their family and business. For this particular study, China is currently the largest trade partner of Thailand (World Integrated Trade Solution, 2017), few Thai firms can afford to ignore the challenges and opportunities brought about by the expanding Chinese economy. Recently, Thai companies have dramatically increased their investments in China (Yabushita & Suehiro, 2014). Thus, many Thai FBs may seriously consider expanding business in China.

Still, the obstacles for firms to internationalize have to be studied. In their seminal article, Johanson and Vahlne (1977) suggest that in order to reduce uncertainty or avoid risk, firms often start foreign operations from culturally-similar countries; and, in a given foreign market, companies often take steps to gradually increase their commitment. As they clarified later, the essence of their argument, commonly known as "Uppsala Model", is not in the mere stages, but in the underlying processes of accumulating knowledge about the foreign market and/or business environment (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). It is worth noting here that international students, with their cross-cultural competence, can be of great value for internationalizing firms (See Liu-Farrer, 2009).

For various reasons, FBs are often not attractive to high-quality 'professional' managers (Barnett & Kellermanns, 2006). Thus, FBs may have to rely on themselves and task their potential heirs studying abroad with the mission of acquiring knowledge about the host country when it is a target of internationalization.

The Post-study Migration plans: Whether to Leave Immediately, Stay Short-term, or Stay long-term

So far this study has discussed how studying abroad can serve the agenda of FBs in addressing their issues of succession and internationalization. Upon graduation, have these graduates learned enough? For the following reasons, we think they still need to stay and learn, until they are better equipped for the tasks of both succession and internationalization, and their post-study migration plans can be shaped accordingly.

Firstly, for addressing the succession issue, while educational achievements are an important criterion for successor-selection, diplomas alone do not guarantee competence in running businesses. Before a successor takes on more responsibilities, he or she often needs to gain work experience, either in his or her own FB or in other companies (Barach, Gantisky, Carson & Doochin, 1988; Danco, 1982). Ward (1997, p. 331) mentioned that the best practices for FBs included encouraging global experience for the next-generation business leaders. Particularly, successful FBs in East Asia often strategically send potential successors abroad for them to gain experience in management, network building, deal-making, and even in situations in which they might learn from failures (Tsang, 2002; Yeung, 2000).

Secondly, for a firm to internationalize, many things cannot be learned at school or through casual talks with local residents. When it comes to market-specific knowledge, although international students can learn 'foreign institutional knowledge' well at school, they may lack 'foreign business knowledge', which can only be learned in real-world business practices (Eriksson, Johanson, Majkgard & Sharma, 1997). The knowledge about foreign countries that the Uppsala Model particularly emphasizes is 'experiential knowledge' in business, which is

a 'central factor in a firm's internationalization' (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009, p. 1416). Thus, to further understand the real business practices and environment of China, Thai international graduates with a FB background would need to stay and continue accumulating 'hands on' business knowledge and experiences.

Regarding internationalization of firms, besides the knowledge issue discussed above, scholars also recognize the importance of network (Chetty & Blankenburg Holm, 2000; Hadley & Wilson, 2003). Johanson and Vahlne (2009), in enriching their original model, argue that the key for a firm to successfully internationalize does not lie merely in its knowledge about the specific market, or its ability to overcome the 'liability of foreignness', but also lies in its ability to overcome the 'liability of outsidership', or the disadvantages associated with being excluded from a business network. As they suggest, with mutual trust and commitment between insiders of a network, the generation of new knowledge and identification of business opportunities will be enhanced. Thus, if the Thai graduate's family is currently doing business in China, he or she may be required to stay there and work as a 'business representative', but perhaps more importantly, their placement is for network building /maintaining, i.e., to know important business people, to build 'Guanxi' (social connections), as well as to earn trust.

Thus, staying in the host country does serve pragmatic aims, but will they stay long? It is well likely that some students from developing countries may follow a study-migration pathway into a developed country (Findlay, Prazeres, McCollum & Packwood, 2017). In reference to Thais studying in China, study-migration pathway is rather unlikely given that wages in China may not be very attractive. Even more, for those with a FB background, upon their graduation, the majority of their FBs is probably remained in Thailand. Therefore, they are somewhat expected or compelled to return and help the FBs (and eventually for inheritance), rather than stay long in China to work as an employee or a business representative of their FB.

As far as the successor-grooming issue is concerned, the years abroad for future successors ought not to be too long, as this time is often just a step in the multiple stages of grooming (Schlepphorst & Moog, 2014). Some studies suggest that characteristics such as integrity, commitment to business, tacit knowledge, and soft skills are important attributes of successors (Brown & Coverley, 1999; Chrisman, Chua & Sharma, 1998). Tacit knowledge, which is often what the success of many FBs hinges upon, can only be transferred through close intergenerational relationships and interactions (Cabrera-Suárez, De Saá-Pérez & García-Almeida, 2001).

Hypothesis 1

Thai international students with a FB background are more likely to plan on staying in their host country of China for a short period of time (rather than leave immediately or stay long-term), compared with students with other family backgrounds.

Who leaves nonetheless?

Short-term stay, thus, can be seen as a solution to balance the two strategic goals of FBs: succession and internationalization. Following this line of thought, when graduating, if the need for them to stay is weak, e.g., the knowledge and network-building issues critical for internationalization have been largely addressed, and/or if the need to return is strong, e.g., they are the much needed human resource or potential successors, they are likely to leave.

The following sections explain how students' educational achievements and ethnic links can help predict which of those with a FB background plan to leave the host country immediately upon graduation.

Educational achievement

Elite universities provide high-quality education for students, and studying at graduate level requires rigorous academic training that fosters deeper understanding of the subjects. In our case, if the majors of Thai international students are China-related, then studying in an elite university or a graduate school engenders deeper and better knowledge about China. Even when the field of study has nothing to do with China, e.g., engineering, studying in elite universities or graduate schools will indirectly allow for practical knowledge about China. Sociologists posit that social ties are important means for providing valuable information (Granovetter, 1974; Lin, 1999). As educational achievement is highly associated with family backgrounds (Coleman, 1987; Torche, 2011), those studying in elite universities or graduate schools are more likely to be surrounded by classmates who have connections with local elites, such as business owners, senior managers, and government officials. They may hear from their classmates about how business transactions are actually made as well as many unwritten rules in China, thus reducing their need to stay for experiential business knowledge.

Moreover, as far as the succession issue is concerned, not only do educational credentials signal competence, they also bring about social recognition. FBs are well known to have non-economic/financial goals, such as maintaining a reputation (Erdem, 2010). Irrespective of whether it is for real competence or just vanity, for those graduating from an elite university or a graduate school, there are probably high expectations for them to return and take on more responsibilities for the FB.

Hypothesis 2a

Among Thai international students with a FB background, those graduating from elite universities are more likely to plan on leaving the host country immediately upon graduation.

Hypothesis 2b

Among Thai international students with a FB background, those graduating with Master's or Doctorate degrees are more likely to plan on leaving the host country immediately upon graduation.

Ethnic Links

FBs often lack resources to form international business networks as easily as non-family firms (Kontinen & Ojala, 2010). Nevertheless, the kin network does not need a lot of resources or efforts to build and maintain. When Thai FBs are expanding businesses in China, they can take advantage of this specific kind of network, as many of them are ethnic Chinese themselves.

For centuries, large numbers of Chinese migrated to Southeast Asia, including Thailand (Bun & Kiong, 1995). A high percentage of these Chinese immigrants in Thailand became business owners, possessing international business connections with relatives across the East and Southeast Asia (Low, 1995). Embedded in ethnicity and/or kinship, these business networks constitute a very important mechanism through which Chinese FBs establish their transnational operations as well as breach the limits of business growth (Dahles, 2004; Yeung, 2000). Unfortunately, many second or third generation ethnic Chinese in Thailand,

characterized by quick assimilation into Thai society, cannot speak the language of their homeland (Skinner, 1957). Now as China's influence keeps growing, the advantages of mastering the Chinese language have become increasingly obvious. Those who speak or understand Chinese can easily and instantly acquire updated information about China through media sources in Chinese. The familiarity with Chinese culture and language largely exempts the 'liability of foreignness' for those who plan to expand business in China. In fact, the Charoen Pokphand Group, now the largest business group in Thailand, became the first foreign investor of the Post-Mao era of China partially because the founder and his children were all fluent in Chinese and had been keeping a close watch on their homeland (Xie, 2016). Among Thais with a FB background and studying in China, we argue that having family member(s) speaking Chinese alleviate the 'liability of foreignness' and therefore reduces their need to stay.

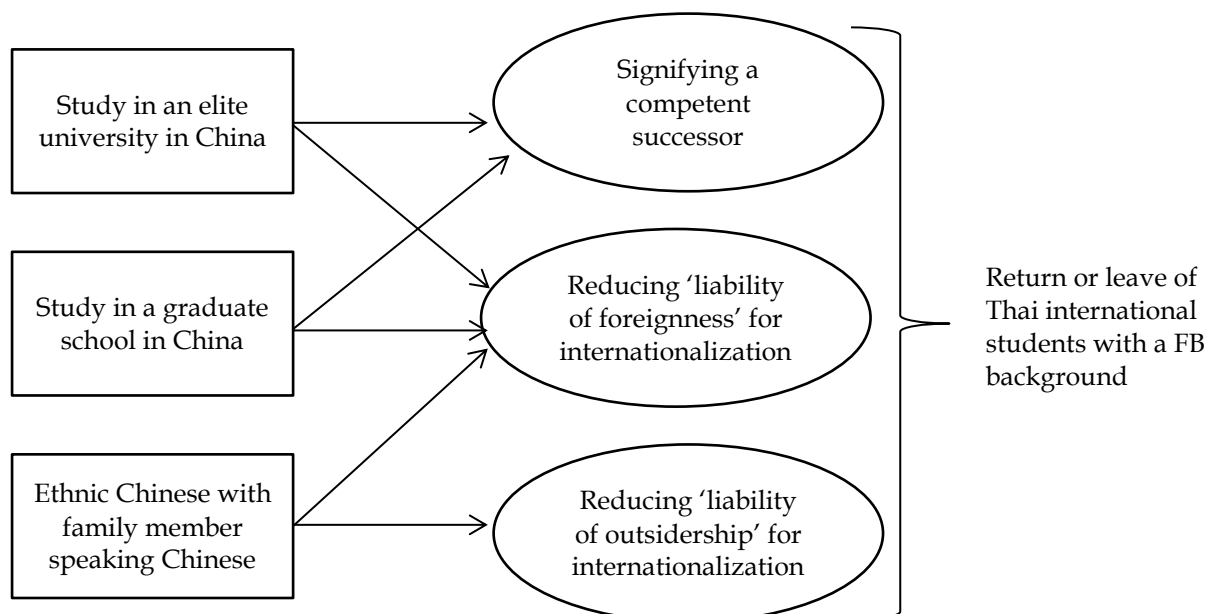
Moreover, we reason that those having at least one family member speaking Chinese are also more likely to have kin connections in China, which means that they not only have a lot of market-specific knowledge but also can have business connections with their relatives in China. Imbued in Confucian philosophy, Chinese society attaches great importance to extended families, where a sense of mutual obligation and trust is typically high (Wong, 1985). Johanson and Vahlne (2009, p. 1417) state that 'Trust can also substitute for knowledge, for instance when a firm lacks the necessary market knowledge and so lets a trusted middleman run its foreign business.' Thus, when the kinship network across China and Thailand is already in place, graduates with a FB background may not need to stay to build and strengthen the international business network.

Hypothesis 3

Among Thai students with a FB background, those whose family member(s) still speak the mother tongue of Chinese are more likely to plan on leaving immediately upon graduating from Chinese universities.

The following graph illustrates our main arguments in Hypothesis 2 and 3.

Figure 1: Factors and Mechanisms Leading to the Intention of Leaving the Host Country upon Graduation



Method

Data collection

The article draws on data we collected in 2015. After acquiring general information about Thai international students registered in Chinese universities from Royal Thai embassy in Beijing, through quota sampling, we chose seven universities to carry out the survey. Although the university sample was not generated randomly due to the lack of information about the population (those pursuing degrees), we tried to make them as representative as possible in terms of types of the universities hosting Thai students: two most prestigious universities and one university that specialized in international business studies were included; for geographic representation, given the budget constraints, the host cities included Beijing and Shanghai, two most chosen cities by Thai students in China. Once a university was chosen, we hired and trained one research assistant who was a Thai student at each of the universities. Through the network of Thais in their respective host universities, research assistants were able to reach most of their compatriots. With a response rate of around 80%, the final sample comprises of 328 respondents. The final sample shows some traits suggesting representation. For instance, the gender ratio (significantly more women, as shown later) is consistent with what an embassy official informed us and is also similar to the statistic of Thai international students in Australia (see Boey, 2014).

Measurements

Dependent variable

The dependent variable in this study is the post-study migration plan. The questionnaire asked, among other things, 'how long do you plan to work or stay in China after finishing your studies.' We adjusted Baruch, Budhwar and Khatri (2007)'s instrument and measured the dependent variable in five duration levels of 'not staying', 'up to 4 years', '4 to 6 years', '7 to 9 years', and '10 years or more'. A further look at the data shows that only 11.28% of the respondents planned to stay for more than 4 years. Accordingly, the dependent variable was reorganized into three categories: those planning to leave immediately upon graduation (constituting 46.34%); those planning to stay for a short period of time, (up to 4 years, constituting 42.38%), and those planning to stay long (4 years or more, constituting 11.28%).

Independent variable

The independent variable is family backgrounds, or specifically, whether the students are from business-oriented families. Whereas there are many different conceptualizations and operationalizations to determine if a student comes from a business-oriented family, in this interdisciplinary study, we simply asked the respondents to state their father's occupation. Based on a Weberian class scheme (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992) and taking into consideration some particular features of Thai society, the fathers' occupations in the questionnaire include categories of 'Business owner', 'Managerial or professional', 'General office clerk', 'Farmer or worker' and others. Business owners account for 59.45% of the sample. As family members' subjective perception is an important part in the prevailing theoretical understanding of FBs (Chua, Chrisman & Sharma, 1999), the above operationalization is justifiable (see also Tan & Fock 2001).

Educational variables

In May of 1998, the Chinese government launched a project called '985' to provide substantive support to 48 selected universities for the purpose of transforming them into world-class ones (see Pan, 2010). These universities are also commonly deemed as the elite universities in China. In our sample, 133 students (40.55%) are from Project 985 universities. For educational level, we only focus on degree-seeking students and differentiate students into undergraduate and graduate levels.

Ethnic links

We have four categories in the questionnaire for students to identify their ethnic links with China: 'I am ethnic Chinese, and at least one grandparent speaks Chinese, although my parents cannot speak the language', 'I am ethnic Chinese, at least one of my parents speaks Chinese', 'I am ethnic Chinese, however, none of my grandparents or parents speaks Chinese', and 'I am not ethnic Chinese'.

Control variables

Basic demographic characteristics such as age and gender were controlled in the statistic models. Moreover, students' field of study was included, as it was found to have an impact on international students' migration intention or results (Kim, Bankart & Isdell, 2011). Table 1 describes the variables used in the analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Variables (N=328)

Variables	Percentage
Demographic Variables	
Gender	
Male	34.45
Female	65.55
Age	24.5 (mean)
Ethnic Links with China	
Not ethnic Chinese	16.46
Ethnic Chinese but no family member speaks Chinese	17.07
Ethnic Chinese but only grandparents speak Chinese	27.74
Ethnic Chinese and parents speak Chinese	38.72
Educational Variables	
Field of Study	
Chinese or Chinese Literature	19.21
Science or engineering	6.1
Business or law	49.39
Social sciences	18.9
Others	6.4
Degree Level	
Undergraduate	37.2
Graduate	62.8
Elite University	
Project 985 universities	40.55
Not-Project 985 universities	59.45
Independent Variable	
Father's Occupation	
Business owner	59.45
Managerial or professional	15.55

Variables	Percentage
Non-manual worker	4.27
Farmer or manual worker	3.35
Others	17.38
Dependent Variable	
Post-Graduation Plan of Staying	
Not planning to stay	46.34
Staying for up to 4 years (short-term)	42.38
Staying for at least 4 years (long-term)	11.28

Analysis

Since the multinomial dependent variable has only three categories, it can be expediently converted into three binary ones (leave vs. others; short-term staying vs. others; long-term staying vs. others). We then conducted three fixed effect logistic regressions given that some factors behind post-study plans could be related to traits of the host cities or universities.

Adopting fixed effect models that focus on within-group variations, however, comes with a cost of not being able to identify the effects of group-level variables. For instance, we cannot identify if graduates of elite universities are generally more inclined toward staying. However, this would not be a problem for our study, as the focus is on the role of family backgrounds, which does vary among students in the same university. Moreover, fixed effect models do not exclude the role of variables at group level altogether, as the moderating effect of group-level variables on individual-level variables can still be identified (see Wooldridge, 2009). In our case, although we cannot identify the effect of Project 985 universities (as a group-level variable), we can nevertheless examine if the effects of family backgrounds vary between Project 985 and non-Project 985 universities, or as proposed in Hypothesis 2.

Results

Table 2 presents the cross table of planned years of staying by father's occupation.

Table 2: Students' Planned Years of Staying by Father's Occupation

Father's Occupation	Planned Years of Staying			Total
	0	up to 4 years	4 years or longer	
Business Owner	80	93	22	195
	41.03	47.69	11.28	100%
Managerial or Professional	27	16	8	51
	52.94	31.37	15.69	100%
Non-manual Worker	8	3	3	14
	57.14	21.43	21.43	100%
Farmer or Manual worker	6	4	1	11
	54.55	36.36	9.09	100%
Others	31	23	3	57
	54.39	40.35	5.26	100%
Total	152	139	37	328
	46.34	42.38	11.28	100%

Note: Pearson $\chi^2(8) = 11.3649$ $Pr = 0.182$

As shown above, 41.03% of those with a FB background planned to leave immediately upon finishing their studies in China, which was much lower than those from any other family background. Meanwhile, 47.69% of this group planned to sojourn for up to 4 years, also the highest among all types of family backgrounds. While those with a FB background seem to show a distinctive pattern, the Pearson Chi-square of the cross table is only close to be significant, partially due to the nuanced classification of fathers' occupations. In Table 3 where we contrast the FB background with all other family backgrounds, the divergence becomes statistically significant. In the following analysis, we keep this dichotomy to highlight the role played by the FB background on post-study mobility plans, which is the main concern of this study.

Table 3: Students' Planned Years of Staying: Business Owner Families and Others

Father's Occupation	Planned Years of Staying			
	0	up to 4 years	4 years or longer	Total
Business Owner	80	93	22	195
	41.03	47.69	11.28	100%
Others	72	46	15	133
	54.14	34.59	11.28	100%
Total	152	139	37	328
	46.34	42.38	11.28	100%

Note: Pearson $\chi^2(2) = 6.1372$ $Pr = 0.046$

In Table 4, control variables are included in the fixed effect logistic regressions to better test Hypothesis 1, i.e., those with a FB background are more likely to plan on short-term staying, rather than leave immediately or long-term staying.

Table 4: Results of Fixed Effect Logistic Regressions

Variables	Model 1 Stay (short/long term) vs. leave	Model 2 Long-term stay vs. other plans
Demographic		
Male	-0.293 (0.251)	-0.310 (0.408)
Age	-0.0674 (0.0475)	-0.0162 (0.0776)
Ethnic Links (Ref= not ethnic Chinese)		
Ethnic Chinese but no family member speaks Chinese	-0.452 (0.422)	-1.133* (0.653)
Ethnic Chinese but only grandparents speak Chinese	-0.0813 (0.398)	-0.365 (0.513)
Ethnic Chinese and parents speak Chinese	-0.0648 (0.378)	-1.068** (0.530)
Educational		
Field of Study (Ref= Chinese or Chinese literature)		
Science or engineering	-0.714 (0.618)	-0.259 (0.943)
Business or law	-0.187 (0.403)	-0.319 (0.602)
Social sciences	-0.162 (0.407)	-0.851 (0.690)

Variables	Model 1 Stay (short/long term) vs. leave	Model 2 Long-term stay vs. other plans
Others	-1.084* (0.569)	-0.728 (0.864)
Graduate Level	0.189 (0.321)	0.398 (0.508)
With FB background (father is a business owner)	0.542** (0.251)	0.0797 (0.383)
Observations	328	312
Number of schools	7	5
Log likelihood	-195.21	-100.23

Note: Standard errors in parentheses, *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Models in Table 4 suggest that the post-study migration plans of Thai students graduating from Chinese universities are somewhat random and unpredictable. Nevertheless, the effect of family backgrounds is clear. Model 1 shows that those with a FB background are more likely to plan on staying rather than leaving; while Model 2, with the coefficient of “with FB background” not being significant, further indicate that they are only inclined to sojourn for a short term, i.e., up to 4 years. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Hypothesis 1 is supported.

This finding is consistent with some other studies. Wailerdasak and Suehiro (2004) found that a high percentage of Thai CEOs or top managers had Master’s or Ph.D. degrees and, although the founders of Thai FBs were typically not well educated, there was a clear trend toward the professionalization of second and later generations. For many Thai business-oriented families, while they could send their children to learn objective knowledge, e.g., statistical tools, in every business school, experiential knowledge, e.g., customer characteristics and needs endemic to a certain country can only be gained through daily interactions with the local people in that country (Badaracco & Badaracco, 1991; Buckley, Munjal, Enderwick, & Forsans, 2016). Moreover, ‘foreign institutional knowledge’ (Eriksson et al., 1997), or the knowledge of government, culture, and institutional frameworks and norms, are likely to be better taught at schools or universities in host countries. This is likely the reason that they prefer to study in China, rather than the US or the UK. Nevertheless, what is learned at school is not enough for doing business in China. Yabushita and Suehiro (2014, p. 1016) argued that ‘the nurturing of expatriated managers and the development of international human resource management have become new considerations for those concerned with the survival and sustainable growth of Thai FBGs.’ Our finding echoes with the above argument, as Thai graduates with FB backgrounds show a strong intention to stay in China, compared with graduates from other family types.

Table 5 shows the results of testing Hypotheses 2 and 3. It should be noted here that the dependent variable is just a binary one: Whether or not they plan on staying upon completion of studies in China. Moreover, given that the language is pivotal for removing liabilities of ‘foreignness’ and ‘outsidership’ (Welch, 2015), we simplify the four-category variable ‘Ethnic Links’ into a binary one: Whether there are at least one of parents or grandparents speaking Chinese. It is assumed that anyone in the business-oriented family who can speak Chinese would help with their knowledge/information about China, hence, there is not much point differentiating grandparents and parents. Moreover, because of the huge number of Chinese immigrants as well as the prevalence of Chinese cultural practices in Thai society (Skinner, 1957), a self-identified ethnic Chinese who nevertheless does not speak Chinese is hardly different from the native ones in terms of cultural familiarity or kinship network with regard

to China. The simplified measurement of ethnic links also makes its interacting effect with the FB background easy to read.

Table 5: Results of Fixed Effect Logistic Regressions with Interaction Terms

Variables	Stay vs. Leave		
	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Demographic			
Male	-0.322 (0.253)	-0.312 (0.253)	-0.319 (0.255)
Age	-0.0681 (0.0472)	-0.0577 (0.0480)	-0.0612 (0.0476)
Ethnic Chinese with Family Member Speaking Chinese	0.186 (0.264)	0.812** (0.375)	0.748** (0.373)
Educational			
Field of Study (Ref= Chinese or Chinese literature)			
Science or engineering	-0.654 (0.619)	-0.645 (0.625)	-0.581 (0.626)
Business or law	-0.198 (0.405)	-0.148 (0.408)	-0.136 (0.412)
Social sciences	-0.197 (0.403)	-0.159 (0.407)	-0.135 (0.409)
Others	-1.156** (0.574)	-1.067* (0.572)	-1.158** (0.579)
Graduate Level	0.643 (0.449)	0.128 (0.324)	0.519 (0.458)
with FB background (father is a business owner)	1.444*** (0.505)	1.353*** (0.438)	2.104*** (0.600)
Interaction Terms			
Graduate Level×FB background	-0.867* (0.526)		-0.724 (0.534)
Elite University×FB background	-0.937* (0.509)		-0.891* (0.513)
Ethnic Chinese with Family Member Speaking Chinese× FB background		-1.256** (0.528)	-1.155** (0.533)
Observations	328	328	328
Number of Schools	7	7	7
Log Likelihood	-193.31	-192.89	-190.92

Note: Standard errors in parentheses, *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

The Model 3 in Table 5 includes interaction terms of educational factors and the FB background to test Hypothesis 2. It can be seen that, although ‘graduate level’ itself is not significant, its effect varies with the FB background (-0.867, significant at 0.1 level). More specifically, among students with a FB background, higher educational level is associated with stronger intentions of leaving, which supports Hypothesis 2b. The other interaction term in Model 3 shows that ‘Elite University’ moderates the effect of the FB background too (-0.937, significant at 0.1 level). In other words, with a diploma gained from an elite (Project 985) university, those with a FB background would be more inclined to leave. Thus, Hypothesis 2a is also supported.

In Model 4 we report the result of testing Hypothesis 3. Unlike the unclear effect of ‘Ethnic Links’ shown in Table 1, when we specifically conceptualize ethnicity in terms of Chinese-language-using in the family, divergent effects of this variable between the FB and the non-FB backgrounds emerge. In Model 4, ‘Ethnic Chinese with Family Member Speaking Chinese’

is positive and significant (0.812, significant at 0.05 level), meaning that among those **without** a FB background, those having family member(s) speaking Chinese are more likely to consider staying. This is not surprising, as their familiarity with Chinese language/culture and the possible kinship connections would facilitate their working or living in China. On the other hand, the interaction term of 'Ethnic Chinese with Family Member Speaking Chinese' and 'FB background' is negative and significant (-1.256, significant at 0.05 level), suggesting that among those **with** a FB background, when they have family members speaking Chinese, intentions of staying after graduation are significantly dampened. Thus, there is clear evidence supporting Hypothesis 3.

Some further analysis

As can be seen in Figure 1, different characteristics of students, as well as different considerations of their FBs, are working together in shaping the inclination to leave or return upon graduation. Can these intertwined mechanisms be further differentiated? In Model 5, we include all the three interaction terms. While 'Graduate Level' × 'with BF background' is not significant anymore, 'Ethnic Chinese with Family Member Speaking Chinese' and 'Elite University' remain to be moderating the effects of the FB background. We reason that the disappeared moderating effect of 'Graduate Level' implies that its main role lies in reducing 'liability of foreignness' regarding internationalization, which can also be significantly reduced by 'Ethnic Chinese with Family Member Speaking Chinese'. Therefore, the independent role of 'Graduate Level' cannot be identified in Model 5. The other two interaction terms remain significant, suggesting that the prestige of the university and Family-Member-Speaking-Chinese work in their independent ways in affecting the stay/leave intentions, probably because they address two different issues facing FBs, i.e., succession and overcoming 'liability of outsidership' when internationalizing. Put differently, elite universities give the choice of competent successors, while the existing kinship network renders the overseas placement less valuable for network-building.

Lastly, it is worth noting that although 'with FB background' remains significant across models in Table 5, its actual role in shaping stay/leave plans depends on different educational and/or ethnic characteristics of students. For instance, in Model 5, the positive and significant coefficient of 'with FB background' means that for a non-elite university undergraduate Thai student from a non-Chinese-speaking family, their family owning a business increases their odds of staying by 8 times ($e^{2.1}=8.2$). As discussed earlier, their sojourn allows further gaining of experiential knowledge about the market, exploring business opportunities, and building business networks for the family. By contrast, for elite university graduate students whose family members speak Chinese, the odds of staying for those with a FB background are just a half of those from other family backgrounds ($2.104-0.724-0.891-1.155=-0.66$, $e^{-0.66}=0.51$). Thus, strategic goals of FBs prove to be a useful lens for us to understand the post-study mobilities of international students.

Conclusions and Discussion

This paper has explored how the strategic goals of family businesses may shape the post-overseas-education migration of their next generation. Based on survey data among Thais graduating from Chinese universities, we find that a plan of a short-term sojourn in the host country is a popular choice for those with a FB background, possibly because it strikes a balance in answering two challenges facing FBs: succession and internationalization. More

specifically, although staying in the host country one graduated from can have the benefits of gaining work experiences for the future successors as well as (experiential) knowledge-gaining and network-building for the internationalizing FBs, a long-term stay is rather unlikely given FB's fundamental needs for human resources and succession. Following the same line of thought, further investigation lends support to the conclusion that when these students with a FB background are graduating from elite universities or graduate schools, by seeming to be good successors and by having acquired better knowledge, they tend to leave with no attempt at even brief extensions; and likewise, students whose family member(s) still use the mother tongue of Chinese are also found to plan on immediate leaving, as the knowledge/network obstacles for internationalization largely do not exist in their cases. Our nuanced analysis also indicates that although both leading to the inclination of immediate leaving, ethnic links are likely to work through reducing the need for business network-building, while the effect of graduating from an elite university probably comes from signifying a good successor.

Studying abroad can sometimes be an escape of students from the rigid domestic educational system and for 'fun', 'excitement', or 'adventure' abroad (Waters, Brooks & Pimlott-Wilson, 2011). But for the most part, the whole process of international student mobility often involves well-calculated strategies of economic units, especially families/households (Waters, 2006; Yeoh, Huang & Lam, 2005). The present study contributes to this line of research by linking post-study migration plans of international students with strategies of FBs behind them. Carefully examining the characteristics and plights of FBs or business-oriented families does pay off in helping us identify the short time sojourn, or delayed return, as their probable post-study mobility pattern, which not only overarches the contradictory previous findings (stay vs. return) regarding this particular group (Marcu, 2015; Lin & Kingminghae, 2017), but also brings attention to the issue of subsequent mobility of international graduates.

In the research of post-international-study migration, most efforts end with the next step following graduation, where graduates typically either acquire a work visa in a developed country or return to the home country with their cultural capital accumulated abroad (Absuelo & Hancock, 2018; Waters, 2006). In this light, international graduates quickly lose their international mobility, as their goals have largely been, through international education, achieved in a certain place, or a destination.

On the other hand, scholars also commonly acknowledge that the years and experiences abroad can fundamentally transform the worldviews of students, often leading to aspirations of international careers or global/transnational mobility (Gomes, 2015; Mohajeri Norris & Gillespie, 2009; Lin & Kingminghae, 2018). Even in cases where this aspiration for transnational mobility has long been there and studying abroad is just the first step (Brooks & Everett, 2008; Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes & Skeldon, 2012), the people international students meet and bond with at foreign educational institutions can help realize their goals of working or living abroad (Waters & Leung, 2013). Simply put, international graduates can become more internationally mobile at heart and in practice.

Between the mobility-diminishing and mobility-enhancing dualism we contrast above, at first look, the students with a FB background in this study seem to be in line with the latter, as they show inclinations of onward mobility after graduation rather than settling down in one place. Nevertheless, their short-term stay plans are not so much driven by the aspiration to further explore the world, but to serve the strategic goals of the FBs behind them; and going to places is closely associated with strategic needs of the FBs, not because of a personal lifestyle choice. Thus, our findings are more in line with the mobility-diminishing argument, at least in spirit, and away from the mobility-enhancing argument, despite seemingly so.

Indeed, staying, returning, going to a third country, or starting a globally mobile lifestyle without a destination, are all possible for international graduates (Findlay et al., 2017). In understanding post-study-migration of international students, the role of family could be critical. By that we do not mean international student mobility is determined by parents or familial considerations, rather, our study simply reminds that examining the specific familial needs and goals, besides personal factors and impacts of other social institutions, are still worthwhile, especially in societies characterized by familial/collectivistic values, and/or when the welfare of the family is through the survival and success of FBs.

Moreover, the present study also resonates with those notice and emphasize the important roles played by international students for firms that are internationalizing (Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Liu-Farrer, 2009; Wiers-Jensen, 2008). In our study, one of the multiple identities that international students may assume (Raghuram, 2013) is an employee or a business partner, and their international mobilities can be understood as strategic placements of internationalizing firms, rather than related to job-finding. As a matter of fact, without appealing to the perspective of internationalization, it is hard to comprehend why students of Chinese ancestry in this study tend to leave upon graduating in their homeland, despite having all the cultural familiarity and kinship networks that facilitate landing a job in China.

There are several limitations of this study that need to be considered. Firstly, while we attempt to explain the post-international-study mobility through the strategies of FBs, the data were gathered from a survey of current students. To make a stronger case, we would have complemented the present study by delving directly into the thinkings of those running the FBs. Second, for the part of the statistical analysis, we classified respondents as having a FB background if his/her father owned a business. By doing so, we might have missed the cases where the mother or other close kin owned the business. However, we assume these circumstances are exceptions, especially given the paternalistic culture in this region. Third, we assume that most international students from business-owning families in this study would probably do what their parents or their FBs require, we may have neglected the 'friction of distance' (Waters, 2002, p. 129) of transnational families. However, we reckon that unlike those couples that split across the Pacific Ocean (see Waters, 2002), the respondents in this study are both geographically closer, and cultural more submissive, to their parents. Future studies are suggested to take heed of the regional particularities, as particular cultures and bilateral relationships may fundamentally shape the international business practices and student mobilities alike.

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