

Student Migrants? Kazakhstan University Students Decide

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International student mobility confronts the developing countries of the post- Soviet region with hard choices. On the one hand, to gain a more skilled and better educated workforce and population, a relatively easy way is to finance students' study abroad. Of course, the risk is that of a brain drain, 'student migrants' who choose to stay in the country of their education, or use their new skills in the international arena outside of their home countries. China certainly experienced this as they sent students to the United States and Western Europe to study only to have them remain there. During the initial period of China's international student program, 1978-1999, 75 per cent of their students did not return home, with 85.9 per cent not returning from the United States (Gürüz 2011 286, 385). As a consequence of this, China changed its educational policies including a focus on improving the quality of education at home. The problem is widespread, but an informed policy to address this inherent tension requires a nuanced understanding of the factors associated with students becoming 'student migrants.'

Aggregate data from UNESCO and the receiving and sending countries provide approximate mobility trends, but do not address the question of why students desire to study abroad or actually decide to do so. At best, national level data provide correlations with other aggregate level indicators which may lead to incorrect inferences. A reliance solely on interviews or focus groups provides little sense as to the representativeness of information provided. To study individual level preferences, two types of evidence are needed. The first requires survey evidence which allows a statistical analysis of factors which are associated with the desire to study and work abroad, such as, language knowledge, use of mass media, and the nature of the

job market at home. The second source of information, more frequently cited in the scholarly literature, is the subjective expressions of students drawn from in depth interviews and focus groups. This article uses data from the Youth Survey of Kazakhstan University Students in which 1,162 students at 10 universities in Kazakhstan (2016) participated. (Principle Investigators C. Kaplan and G. Nasimova). These data are supplemented by focus groups in China and Russia (2018) and interviews with students who studied in the US and UK (2019) (conducted by G. Nasimova).¹ Our approach distinguishes itself from most other studies in recognizing that students in Kazakhstan are a heterogeneous population comprised of ethnic Kazakhs who study in Kazakh or Russian and ethnic Russians.² In a society like Kazakhstan, differences among students must be considered an essential factor in the phenomenon of ‘student migrants.’

As Russell King & Gunjan Sondhi (2018) in their study of international student migration from the United Kingdom and India recognize that the educational marketplace offers “inherent geometries of power” (177). Kazakhstan sends the majority of its students studying abroad (90,187 total students studied abroad in 2016) to Russia (approximately 70 per cent in 2015/2016), followed by China, Kyrgyzstan, the United Kingdom and the United States (6,064) (Exact figures vary somewhat by source, but the proportions are the same.) (UNESCO Education: Outbound International data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=172 accessed 4/17/2019, Shubytov, Chankseliani 2018). As a resource rich country of Eurasia, Kazakhstan’s students study in both the ‘North’ and ‘South.’ As a consequence of its status as a part of the

¹ Focus groups were conducted in Russia in March 2018 and September 2018 and in China in November 2018. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with students studying in the USA and Europe January –April 2019. Students were randomly chosen from those studying at institutions of higher education at which students from Kazakhstan matriculate.

² For the purpose of our analysis, we exclude students of other ethnic backgrounds because each group is too small for statistical analysis and they do not constitute a single population about which inferences can be drawn.

former Soviet Union and close historic relations with Russia which continue through the Eurasian Economic Union established in 2014, its students continue to be drawn to Russia. Widespread fluency in Russian among ethnic Kazakhs, especially those living in urban areas, and ethnic Russians (Fierman 2012 1082, Vdovina, 2008, Smagulova 2008, 456-457) means that Russia may be an attractive close-by place to study which for some offers a comfortable, familiar milieu in which to live. The US and Western Europe represent a different attraction, while far away and more expensive, they provide experiences which prepare students for a globalized world. In the case of the US and for some programs in Europe, English is essential for pursuit of these opportunities. China, with its rapid economic growth and quality education, offers a third choice which is less expensive and close-by. Students from Kazakhstan represent a microcosm of the global market making their study of particular interest and consequence for developing countries and former colonies.

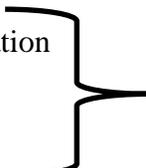
Many theories of international student migration focus on the macro levels of global trends in education and the emergent desires of a growing middle class in developing countries for travel (King 2018, Brooks and Waters 2011). In this article we focus on the micro level, the factors which help explain student desire to remain in Kazakhstan to study or work or to go abroad. We focus on the impact of language knowledge, media use, sources of information, and the perceived ease of finding a job after graduation on the desire to remain or leave Kazakhstan.

Dependent Variable – Desire to Study or Work Abroad

On our 2016 Youth Survey of University Students in Kazakhstan we asked students about their future plans.

*What are your plans after the completion of University?*³

Q 41 What do you plan to do after the completion of university? (Note all that you plan to do.)

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get more education in Kazakhstan 2. Work in Kazakhstan |  | [Go to Q 43] |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Go abroad to get educational education 4. Go to work abroad |  | [Go to Q 42] |

Q 42. If you plan to leave Kazakhstan where would you select to go?
(Please select only one)

- 1. Russia
- 2. Western Europe
- 3. China
- 4. USA
- 5. Turkey
- 6. Middle East
- 7. Somewhere else (Please, write in) _____
- 8. I plan to leave, but don't know to where

We recoded the answers to question Q41 into two separate variables – a desire to stay and study or work in Kazakhstan, or to continue their education or work abroad. We divide this variable into separate components because the reasons why one might wish to stay in Kazakhstan, may well differ from the reasons why one might wish to go abroad. For those who wished to go abroad, we then ask where they would like to study in Q42. These three variables constitute the object of our quantitative study.⁴

³ Our survey was fielded in both Russian and Kazakh. A more complete explanation is provided in the appendix.

⁴ We are aware that the desire to study or work abroad after university in Kazakhstan may differ from the decision to complete a baccalaureate degree abroad. In our in depth interviews and focus groups, we inquire as to the reasons students decided to study abroad and in the case of in depth interviews we include those in post-graduate programs.

What explains a desire to study or work abroad?

Language Knowledge

Language policy in Kazakhstan has shifted overtime, with Kazakh as the official state language (Fierman 2012, 1083). Russian language is supported for inter-national communication and local state communications, but is no longer necessary to pursue higher education. The structural advantages which Russian enjoyed during the Soviet era are receding (Smagulova 2008: 457-458). In 2007 President Nazarbayev declared a policy encouraging the younger generation to know three languages, Kazakh, Russian and English, recognizing English as a key to the international arena (Beisenova 2013, Smagulova 2008). For the generation of university students after the Soviet collapse, language trends, have shifted from those of their parents (Smagulova 2016 100). Increasingly a higher proportion of ethnic Kazakh students study in Kazakh (Smagulova 2008 464), but in urban areas where most Russians live Russian remains dominant in the public domain, even if the use of Kazakh increases in the private domain among ethnic Kazakhs (Smagulova 2008 462-468, Smagulova 2016 105, Vdovina 2008). As the asymmetries of Kazakh and Russian began to shift, the prestige of languages has begun to change for this generation of students (Smaguova 2016 102). The knowledge of English also has increased and internationally the knowledge of English is linked with global mobility (Lasanowski 2011, 193-209). This leads us to the question: How has the knowledge of Kazakh, Russian and English affected the desire to study or work abroad?

Language Hypotheses

We do not assume that language knowledge will have the same effect on all university students in Kazakhstan. We expect to find differences not simply reflecting language knowledge in and of itself, but different effects depending on whether the respondent is an ethnic Kazakh or

Russian. We also expect to find heterogeneity among Kazakhs depending on whether they study in the Kazakh or Russian language.

Hypotheses:

1. The better the knowledge of English, the higher the likelihood a student will choose to study, or work outside of Kazakhstan.

1a. Those with a better knowledge of English are more likely to choose the US, or Europe as a destination.

2. The better the knowledge of Russian among ethnic Kazakhs, the more likely to study or work abroad.

However, the knowledge of Russian among ethnic Kazakhs will have a smaller impact, than English on the desire to study or work abroad. We do not expect fluency in the Russian language to affect the likelihood of ethnic Russians' mobility. However, ethnic Russians' knowledge of Kazakh might increase the likelihood of remaining in Kazakhstan, since Kazakh language might increase integration into an emerging society in which its use is growing.

3. The better the knowledge of the Kazakh language, the less likely the choice to leave Kazakhstan among ethnic Russians.

Media Usage

Much is written about contemporary youths' use of new forms of media – the internet, blogs, and social media. Older, more traditional media, such as, state television played an important didactic role in the former Soviet Union (Mickiewicz 1988). It has taken time for television, print media and radio to develop an independent voice in Kazakhstan as opposed to reflecting Russia's media world. This development started in 2012, first affecting Russian language media and later Kazakh language media (Asholakova and Ismailova 2013 1583). We might expect given this situation to see a burgeoning of alternative, new media use among university youth. As we will see, our data don't support this.

In a recent presentation by Gul'mira Ileuova (2018) she presented survey data showing that television remains the most used media source for information in 2017 at 64 per cent of the population of Kazakhstan, followed by the internet (39 per cent) and discussion with relatives, acquaintances and colleagues (31 per cent). Reliance on television for information fell by only eight per cent from 2012 to 2017, while internet reliance increased 20 per cent and conversations with relatives, acquaintances and neighbors increased by 10 per cent. This is in contrast to the decline of reliance on newspapers which decreased from 32 per cent in 2009 to only 6 per cent 2017. Thus, in the lifetime of most of our students' media habits have substantially changed. Ileuova notes that youth tend to channel skip on TV and the 18 to 34 year old group tends to view TV while involved in other activities (63 to 71 per cent). Those under 54 years of age say that they don't believe everything they see, hear, or read on TV, newspapers or the radio (52 – 54 per cent). Interestingly, the report notes skepticism towards news from the internet with a tendency to verify it through watching TV. This raises the issue of whether university youth reflect the dominant trends found in Kazakhstan and use new media, such as the internet, blogging, and social media consistent with a developing global youth culture. (For Russia, see Mickiewicz 2014, Chapter 4). The central issue is whether the source of students' news matters for decisions to stay or leave Kazakhstan for study or work.

Media Hypotheses:

4. The more television watched, the higher the probability of remaining in Kazakhstan.

The logic is that television programs are more likely to be state centric, than other forms of media.

5. The use of new media (news portals, blogs, the internet) increases the likelihood of a desire to move abroad.

A separate issue is whether the country from which information comes affects youth decisions to stay, or leave Kazakhstan upon graduation. On our survey we asked how frequently the respondent in the last 6 months was interested in information from Kazakhstan, Russia, Europe, USA, China, and the Near East. This information provides a basis on which to assess whether the source of information influences youth decisions on migration.

Economic Factors

Financial reasons for studying or working abroad, or remaining in the home country are often the source behind student and parental decisions. These factors may exert more influence on the choice of where to get a baccalaureate degree, than post –graduate study.⁵ Somewhat contradictory factors may constitute the ‘push’ to go abroad. The rise of a middle class is associated with international student mobility (Lasanowski 2011, 193). However, although better off, the cost of education still plays a role in the choice to study abroad. Among factors mentioned by Kazakhstan students studying abroad are the cost of education in Kazakhstan, the perceived superiority of education abroad connected with getting a future job and the lack of jobs in Kazakhstan. Our survey data allow us to test whether the perception of difficulty in finding a job after graduation impacts a desire to study or work outside of Kazakhstan.⁶

Economic Hypothesis:

6. The greater the perception that getting a job after graduation will be difficult, the more likely the desire to leave Kazakhstan.

⁵ We recognize this based on our focus groups and in depth interviews, especially in China.

⁶ We asked students about their economic situations in the last year and in the coming year, but since students’ lives are often uncertain financially, we use their perception of how easy it will be to find a job. We feel that this is a more reliable indicator, than estimates which include parental income.

In addition to language knowledge, media use, and the ease of getting a job, we also test whether religiosity, democratic values, regional differences and urban/rural residence are associated with a desire to study or work outside of Kazakhstan. One might hypothesize that the greater a student's religiosity, particularly among Muslims, the greater the wish to stay in their home communities, or study in the Middle East. Those with more democratic values might be more likely to desire to study or work in Western Europe or the United States. Regional differences and urban/rural residence may also affect mobility. Rural areas and the South and West of Kazakhstan offer more traditional Kazakh contexts decreasing the likelihood of mobility. The Northeast in which Russian culture has a strong presence may make a decision to study or work in the Russian Federation more likely. Almaty, the largest metropolis in Kazakhstan, has a more global, international environment making international opportunities more enticing.

Most studies of international student mobility treat students as if they were a homogeneous group from their country of origin. Clearly differences based on ethnicity differentiate self-identified ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Russians, but among ethnic Kazakhs there are also clear differences between those who speak Kazakh or Russian as their primary lingua franca as suggested by the work of David Laitin (1996). This within group heterogeneity among ethnic Kazakhs associated with language usage and to some degree language knowledge is an artifact of the Soviet incentive system. In our survey, we find that Kazakh students who study in Kazakh and those who study in Russian differ in their attitudes and values. From a theoretical perspective, this can be thought of as differences in constitutive norms, or 'contestation' within the group (Rawi, et al, 2006 697-698), i.e., not an issue of language itself, but different norms and values, such as, those associated with religiosity and democracy. For this reason, we present

our empirical findings based on three distinct groups: ethnic Kazakh students studying in the Kazakh language, ethnic Kazakhs who study in Russian and ethnic Russians who are citizens of Kazakhstan.⁷ Our survey included 65.9 per cent of students who self-identified as Kazakh among whom 84 percent study in Kazakh and 15.4 percent study in Russian. Russians who have Kazakhstan citizenship represent 24.3 percent of the total sample (the remaining approximately 10 percent represent a wide array of different ethnic groups who are not included in this analysis).

Data and Methods

The Survey: The Kazakhstan Youth Survey was fielded in the Fall/Winter 2016 with a small supplement in the Spring 2017. The questionnaire was written in Russian and translated into Kazakh. Professional back translation was used to ensure accuracy of meaning. The survey was self-administered lasting approximately 25 minutes. The research employs best practices in its approach to obtaining a university student sample sufficiently large to permit statistical analysis. Anonymity of students was stipulated and questionnaires were available in both the Kazakh and Russian languages. Consistent with the object of the study, our aim was to sample university students between the ages of 18 and 22. The average age of respondents was just a little over 19 years of age. All data were entered at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University with those editing questionnaires switching questionnaires to do data entry in order to provide an extra check in

⁷ Instruction at public institutions of higher education is separated into Russian and Kazakh tracks. English is also offered for specific courses. Nazarbayev University, Astana (now NurSultan), is the exception which offers all instruction in English. The language of study at state universities is to a large extent an artifact of the language in which secondary school was completed. Although we present findings based on the language in which the self-identified ethnic student answered the questionnaire, Kazakh or Russian, we also checked whether the language spoken at home would change results in a significant way. It did not. We exclude students who self-identified as an ethnic group which was neither Kazakh, nor Russian. This is because the differences among these students make it impossible to consider them a homogeneous population about which to draw inferences. We limit our analysis of ethnic Russian students to those who have Kazakhstan citizenship.

order to avoid mistakes. Data were cleaned at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The number of survey respondents was 1,161.

The survey uses a purposeful sample with an oversample of ethnic Russians. Two concerns dominated our approach to sampling. First was to obtain a sufficient number of students to allow for tests of statistical significance. Second was to be sufficiently inclusive to capture diversity within the student population. Following best practices, we did not select any student based on a factor which we would study (dependent variable).

Two types of characteristics were foremost in creating the sample - geographic and ethnic diversity. Geographic diversity was addressed through choosing 10 universities located in different areas of Kazakhstan. The 10 universities at which we fielded the survey were a convenience sample which included both private and public universities throughout Kazakhstan.⁸ We chose to create an oversample of ethnic Russians in order to have a sufficient number for statistical analysis. At each university those conducting the survey were given a target number of students to have complete the survey. This target number was broken down by ethnicity, Kazakh and Russian, although at no time was any student chosen based on ethnicity. Selection was based on the language in which a class was offered— Kazakh or Russian, not the ethnicity of students. Since the ethnic Russian population might differ between the north of Kazakhstan and those in the south, particularly Almaty, we attempted to have equal numbers of ethnic Russians from the north and south. This was implemented by checking completed questionnaire answers on self-identified ethnicity and sampling more classes, if the quota was not met.

⁸ Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Women's Pedagogical University, Almaty, Bolashak, Kyzylorda, Korkit Ata, Kyzylorda, Ahmet Yassawi, Turkestan, NE Technical University, Oskemen, Eurasia National University, Astana, Karagandy State University, Karagandy, Alma University (International Business Academy), KIMEP, Almaty. An attempt was made to include a predominantly Russian speaking university in the north of Kazakhstan, but it was unsuccessful.

The data produced by the above approach was sufficient for statistical analysis, such as logistic regression, but would not be representative for descriptive statistics. For this reason we created a weighted sample.⁹ We created a ratio of Kazakh and Russian students in a region assuming that it is the same as the ratio of Kazakh and Russian people.¹⁰ To do this, we compute the weight for Kazakhs in each region (and for Russians). We then adjusted the weighted student sample sizes for each region with weights so that the students sampled are in the same ratios to one another as the number of students in the population are to one another.¹¹

Methods The quantitative work presented uses the weighted sample in presenting descriptive statistics. We do not present data for non-ethnic Kazakhs or Russians, since we cannot draw inferences about such a diverse ethnic group. With few exceptions, we present data by ethnicity and the language in which the student was studying. Thus, we have ethnic Kazakhs who study in Kazakh, Kazakhs who study in Russian and ethnic Russians studying in Russian.¹² When presenting descriptive statistics for explanatory variables we utilize means for indicators in order to compare their average distribution between the three groups studied. An unweighted sample is used for logistic regression when analyzing whether students wished to remain in or leave

⁹ A more complete description of the sample and weights can be found in Cynthia Kaplan, Gulnar Nasimova and Henry Brady (2018) “Research Note: Methods in Studying University Youth in Kazakhstan.” *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Political Science* no. 4 (66): 126-130.

¹⁰ This is an assumption we had to make because no data was available on the ethnic composition of students at specific institutions of higher learning. National data on the ethnicity of university students is available for 2001-2005, but enrollment trends were changing and no subsequent data could be found. (Vdovina 2008). Given this, we had to make an assumption using ethnic data by oblast available from the 2009 census.

¹¹ The Ministry of Education and Science makes public the number of students at institutions of higher education by oblast. We used these data for creating regional weights.

¹² We did test the robustness of results using language of study compared to the use of language at home. Differences were relatively minor. Since a number of students said that they spoke both Kazakh and Russian at home, this decreased the number of ethnic Kazakh studying in Russian. We decided to delineate groups based on language of study.

Kazakhstan. We present the results of logic regression and odds ratios. (Marginal effects graphs are available upon request).

Factors Which Explain Student Mobility

Among the potential factors affecting the desire to stay or leave Kazakhstan are language knowledge, frequency of media type used, country of news, sex, region within Kazakhstan (or urban/rural residence), democratic values, religiosity and the economy. Language can be thought of as a structural variable or gate keeper. Although language can be acquired, we take language knowledge as a given at the time of the survey. In our analysis we include knowledge of Russian, Kazakh, and English. We asked, “Which languages do you know (vladeete in Russian)? To what extent do you know each of the languages listed below?” Our scale is 0-4 with 0 no knowledge, 1 speaking, 2 reading, 3 reading & speaking, 4 fluent reading, speaking and writing.¹³ Below we provide the mean level that each of our three groups Kazakhs who study in Kazakh (kzkz), Kazakhs who study in Russian (kzr) and Russians who are citizens of Kazakhstan (RusKZcitz).

Table 1 Language Knowledge by Student Ethnicity and Language of Study
(Mean Values)

		kzkz	kzr	RusKZcitz
Knowledge of Language	Kazakh	3.97	3.47	1.91
	Russian	3.42	3.93	3.95
	English	2.5	3.08	2.73

Knowledge of the Kazakh language differs among ethnic Kazakh university students, but for Kazakh students studying in Russian their mean knowledge of Kazakh is on the border between

¹³ We allowed for an opened ended answer for additional languages including Chinese, but there were too few respondents in these additional categories to use in analysis.

reading and speaking and fluent which is defined as reading, speaking and writing. Russians at university read or speak Kazakh, an improvement in ethnic Russian knowledge of Kazakh over earlier generations (Aminov 2010). Still, 23.5 per cent of ethnic Russian students knew no Kazakh, while only 2 per cent of Kazakh students studying in Kazakh didn't know any Russian. Russian language knowledge is high among all university students and English is only slightly lower among Kazakhs studying in Kazakh, than among ethnic Russian students. Kazakhs studying in Russian have the highest knowledge of English.

The media indicators are the result of a question which asks, "In the course of the last month how frequently did you use each of the following listed sources? – Newspapers, radio, television, news portals (Kazakh, Russian, European), blogs, social networks (VK, Facebook, Twitter) & family. (Scale 0-4 Never to Constantly). Based on the frequency of use by respondents, we include television, the internet and newspapers in our subsequent analysis.

Table 2 Media Use: TV, Internet, Newspapers by Student Ethnicity and Language of Study (Mean Values)

		kzkz	kzr	RusKZcitz
Media	TV	3.07	2.67	2.61
	Internet	3.21	3.38	2.95
	Newspaper	2.14	1.79	1.72

As is true for the general population, newspaper reading has declined, but television remains an important source of information. The internet appears to be favored by Kazakh students, more than Russian students.

We also asked "How frequently in the last 6 month were you interested in information from Kazakhstan, Russia, Europe, the USA and the Middle East?" Respondents answered for

each country using a scale from 0-4 (0 almost never – 4 constantly). In our analysis we use indicators for information from Europe, the US, Russia and China.

Table 3 Country Sources of Information by Student Ethnicity and Language of Study (Mean Values)

		kzkz	kzr	RusKZcitz
Source of Information	Kazakh	3.77	3.61	3.38
	Russia	2.55	2.88	3.09
	China	2.27	1.94	1.85
	Europe	2.66	2.59	2.55
	US	2.69	2.74	2.52

Interest in information from Europe and the United States was relatively similar among students, but unsurprisingly Kazakh students were more interested in news about Kazakhstan, than Russian students despite being citizens of Kazakhstan. Russian students were somewhat more interested in news from Russia, while Kazakh students studying in Kazakh sought news from China.

Cultural attitudes in Kazakhstan may be related to gender, region, and urban/rural residence. Conservative, more traditional values among ethnic Kazakhs may be gender related reflecting the role of women in more traditional Muslim society. The majority of ethnic Kazakhs are Muslim with more traditional cultural practices in rural areas in which ethnic Kazakhs dominate (Bektuganova and Nurgalieva 2016). Our survey asked students where they had lived before they entered university by naming a city or writing in the name of a settlement. They could also note that they lived in a village. Their residences were then coded into provinces. These provinces were then grouped to create homogeneous clusters.

Religiosity was determined by a series of questions. We asked students whether they self-identified with a religious tradition, or were atheists. Most Kazakh students identified with

Islam (99.4 per cent). Ethnic Russians identified as Orthodox (97 per cent). Some students also identified as atheists (6.1 per cent). Most students provided an association with a religious tradition, but a small group found it difficult to answer the question of religious identification or refused to do so (5.5 per cent). Approximately 2 per cent of students indicated that they were Protestant or identified with other religious traditions. Religiosity is an additive index based on behavior – observance of religious norms of life, fasts, reading of prayers, and frequency of attending services at a house of worship. (We excluded answers to a question as to whether students observed religious norms at work or school because the distribution of the answers appeared random due to institutional policies.) The variable uses a scale of 0 not religious at all, 1-somewhat religious 2 -religious 3-very religious.

Table 4 Religiosity of Students by Ethnicity and Language of Study
(Mean Values)

	kzkz	kzr	RusKZcitz
Religiosity	1.78	1.12	0.93

Kazakh students studying in Kazakh were the most religious and Russian students the least religious. Among ethnic Kazakhs who identified as Muslims, almost 5 per cent were in the most observant category. Support for freedom of religion which we include among democratic values is lowest among Kazakh students studying in Kazakh.

Democratic values can also influence mobility. Students might be drawn to countries which are more democratic, or avoid less democratic countries depending on their values.

Democratic values was based on a question asking how important each of three items were on a

4 point scale ranging from not at all important to very important.¹⁴ The specific items constituting the scale include

Freedom of expression of political views

Right to participate in a social or political organization

Equality before the law

An additive index was created based on these items plus answers to a question asking “How important for you is freedom of religion?” (4 point scale)

Table 5 Democratic Values by Ethnicity of Student and Language of Study
(Mean Values)

	kzkz	kzr	RusKZcitz
Democratic Values	2.2763	2.0035	1.7474

Although at first glance it appears that Kazakh students studying in Kazakh have the highest support for democratic values, we believe that this is driven by the right to practice Islam.

Ethnic Russian students have the lowest levels of support for democratic values.

Finally, economic factors can influence a student’s desire to study or work abroad. Here we chose to use their perception of how difficult it would be to find a job after graduation. “If you were to decide to work upon completion of university, to what degree do you think it would be easy or difficult to find work?” Answers on a five point scale ranged from easy to find work 1 to impossible to find work 5. Somewhat surprisingly, the differences between groups were not substantial. Russian students thought it would be slightly more difficult to find a job, than ethnic

¹⁴ We also asked about the right to receive education in their native language, but did not include this in the scale since it did not represent one of the classic dimensions of democratic values.

Kazakh students. In light of the large scale migration of ethnic Russians after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 which continued through the 1990s, it is surprising that economic fears regarding opportunities for future employment don't appear substantially different among ethnic Russian students from those of ethnic Kazakhs.

Table 6 Ease of Finding a Job by Ethnicity of Student and Language of Study
(Mean Values)

	kzkz	kzr	RusKZcitz
Easy to Find a Job	2.53	2.56	2.62

Who Leaves and Who Stays?

Our survey asked about student plans after completion of university. Answers included staying in Kazakhstan for additional education or work and leaving Kazakhstan in order to pursue additional education or to work abroad. We combine answers indicating a desire to go abroad and those indicating a desire to remain in Kazakhstan. As noted earlier, we don't view this as a simple binary choice. The reasons for leaving may be different from those for staying. Based on this we created two separate dependent variables. The distribution of these two variables is found in Table 7.

Table 7 Student Mobility by Ethnicity of Student and Language of Study
(Percentage)¹⁵

		kzkz	kzr	RusKZcitz
	Leave	18.70 % (N=151)	33.40 % (N=66)	30.50 % (N=68)
	Stay	57.00 % (N=460)	47.80 % (N=95)	55.50 % (N=123)

¹⁵ The percentages in each group do not total 100 percentage because some students skipped the question, or ignored the skip pattern and indicated that they intended to leave and stay. We examined these answers to see if a pattern could be found.

Interestingly, the largest proportion of students planning to leave Kazakhstan are ethnic Kazakhs studying in Russian, even more than ethnic Russians (who are citizens of Kazakhstan).¹⁶ The big difference is the lower desire for mobility among ethnic Kazakhs studying in Kazakh. These differences suggest that ethnicity alone does not explain the desire to stay in Kazakhstan or move abroad.

Table 8 Destination of Move Abroad by Ethnicity of Student and Language of Study (Percentage)

		kzkz	kzr	RusKZcitz
Destination	Russia	2.10 % (N=17)	3.0 % (N=6)	15.40 % (N=34)
	US & EU	17.30 % (N=140)	28.80 % (N=57)	16.80 % (N=25)

Although the desire to move aboard was similar between students studying in Russian whether ethnic Kazakh or Russian, the destinations were different as seen in Table 8. There were too few students wishing to go to other destinations like China or the Middle East to analyze.¹⁷

Results

Our objective is to identify factors which assist in understanding the international mobility of students from Kazakhstan. We do this by assessing the effects of language knowledge, media usage, sources of information, religiosity, democratic values and the perceived ease of finding employment after university graduation on the probability of staying or

¹⁶ We excluded Russians who were not citizens of Kazakhstan. We know this due to a follow-up on non-voting behavior. We do not know whether they have another citizenship. If their parents chose citizenship in the Russian Federation, their reasons for going to Russian may not reflect the same mobility factors as those having Kazakhstan citizenship.

¹⁷ Destinations may differ among those considering baccalaureate degrees as suggested by focus groups in China.

leaving Kazakhstan through logistic regression. In addition to the explanatory factors, we included the sex of our respondent and the region in which they lived before entering university as independent variables. The full results of the logistic regression are presented in Appendix A. We present the Odds Ratios which are easier to interpret in Appendix B. These results allow us to compare the positive and negative effects of each of the above mentioned factors on the probability of leaving or staying for each of our student groups. We also examine the effects of these variables on the preferred destinations- Russia or the US/Europe- for those students who indicated a preference of studying or working abroad.

Table 9 Effects of Explanatory Variables on Probability of Leaving or Staying in Kazakhstan

		Leave			Stay	
	Kazakh Students Studying in Kazakh	Kazakh Students Studying in Russian	Russian Students	Kazakh Students Studying in Kazakh	Kazakh Students Studying in Russian	Russian Students
Language	Russian	None	None	None	None	None
	Kazakh	None	Negative	None	None	None
	English	Positive	Positive ++	None	None	Negative
Media type		None	None	None	None	None
	TV	Negative	None	None	None	None
	Newspapers	None	None	None	None	None
	Internet	None	None	None	None	None
Origin of Information (Countries)		None			None	
	Russia	None		None		None
	Europe	Positive		None	Negative	None
	USA	Positive		Positive	Negative	Negative
	China	Negative		Negative	Positive	Positive++
Ease of Finding a Job	Positive	Positive++	None	None	None	None
Religiosity	None	None	None	None	None	None
		Almaty, North East Central*				
Region	None		None	None	None	None
Democratic Values	None	None	None	Positive	None	None
Sex	Positive++	None	None	Negative	None	None

Note: None is used if the variable had no effect on any of the respondents' desire to leave or stay. “++” is added when there is a particularly strong positive effect.

* Coming from Almaty and the North-Central-East region are statistically significant for Kazakh students studying in Russian; their impact, however, is almost zero

Language Knowledge- The effect of language knowledge on the probability of staying or leaving Kazakhstan produced some unexpected results. Among all ethnic Kazakh students the better the knowledge of English, the greater the likelihood of leaving Kazakhstan. English knowledge had no significant effects on ethnic Russians' mobility preferences. We hypothesized that knowledge of Kazakh might influence ethnic Russians' preference to remain in Kazakhstan, but this was not the case. However, among ethnic Kazakhs studying in Russian the better their knowledge of Kazakh, the lower the probability of leaving Kazakhstan. Knowledge of English among ethnic Kazakhs who desire to study or work abroad did positively affect their choice of destination – the USA or Europe. For ethnic Russians knowledge of English decreased the probability of selecting Russia as a destination. Knowing Russian had no statistically significant effects on mobility.

Media Usage and Information-Youth use of media had relatively little effect on mobility. The use of new media, like the internet, had no effect. However, television depressed the desire to leave among ethnic Kazakhs studying in Kazakh. Unlike the use of media, the country from which students sought information did have an impact on mobility preferences. Information from Europe affected Kazakh students' desire to study or work abroad in a consistent manner- lowering the probability of staying in Kazakhstan and increasing the probability of leaving. Information from the United States also increased the probability of leaving among ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Russians. Information from Russia had no effect. A positive effect of information from China on staying in Kazakhstan was found among Kazakhs studying in Kazakh and on ethnic Russians, but the reasons for this require additional exploration. Neither sources of information, nor media type affected mobility preferences among ethnic Kazakhs studying in Russian.

Easy to Find a Job-Our initial hypothesis was that ethnic Russian students might perceive the difficulty of finding a future job as a reason to leave Kazakhstan. This was not found. In fact, it was rather among ethnic Kazakh students that the more difficult they thought finding a job after graduate would be, the more likely they would leave Kazakhstan.

Other Factors-A series of other factors, especially those associated with more traditional, or cultural aspects of Kazakhstan were examined. Religiosity and the region from which a student came did not affect the probability of leaving or staying. We tested the potential impact of regions in several ways. In the end we included three regions¹⁸ in the logistic analysis, although we also tested the impact of region using only Almaty. We tested separately without region for urban/rural effects. None of these produced tangible results. However, female ethnic Kazakh students studying in Kazakh were much more likely to want to leave, than their male counterparts. This effect may reflect the more traditional roles of women in Kazakh culture.

Destinations-Among those students who indicated a desire to study or work abroad, we asked where they would choose to go. We present results for two locations-Europe & the USA (coded together as a single variable) and Russia. These choices are in part due to the numbers needed for statistical analysis, but there is also a substantive reason. If as many studies of international mobility note (Gürüz 2011 201-317) having a colonial history can affect the choice of where to study, then these two locations represent different options. It is also known that some students choose to study in Russia as a means of step migration. They first go to study and then choose to remain. (Nam 2015).

¹⁸ We coded our students' pre-university places of residence in three different ways using 7 categories, 5 categories and 3 categories. In the end, we used 3 categories which included the South & West where ethnic Kazakhs dominate, North-Central-East where Russians are more dominant, and Almaty.

Based on logistic regression (Appendices A & B) we find the reasons associated with these choices for each student group are distinctive. A number of the explanatory variables which don't affect the probability of leaving, do affect where the students wish to go. English increases the probability of choosing Europe and the US among all ethnic Kazakh students, but does not affect this choice for ethnic Russians. Information from the US has a positive effect on the desire of Kazakhs studying in Kazakh and Russians to go to the USA and Europe and information from China a negative one. Being female also has a positive effect on the choice of the USA and Europe as destinations. The two most interesting findings are that for the first time religiosity has a positive effect on wanting to go to Europe or the US among ethnic Kazakhs studying in Kazakh. The more difficult it is to get a job, the less likely Russians choose the US and Europe, but the effect is slight. For ethnic Kazakhs studying in Russian, being from the North-Center-East has a slight depressing effect on the probability of this choice. Choosing Europe and the USA is more consistent with having information about it, consistent with the idea found in the general literature on student international mobility that these destinations offer better educational opportunities which can be converted into global careers.

Russia given its geographical location and, at least for some, the familiarity of its culture, is an attractive destination. For the first time, internet has an effect. Using the internet among ethnic Kazakhs studying in Kazakh increases the probability of choosing Russia as a destination and information from China also has a big positive impact. For ethnic Kazakhs studying in Russian none of the factors analyzed affects the probability of going to Russia, but this is probably an artifact of the small number of students making this choice (3 per cent). For ethnic Russian students who are citizens of Kazakhstan, a knowledge of English makes going to Russia less probable as do democratic values. Information from both Russia and the US make the

choice of Russia more likely, while information from China makes it less so. Here it is fair to say that for ethnic Russians the better their English and the more supportive they are of democratic values, the less probable their desire to go to Russia.

Some of the reasons why university students who have matriculated at universities in Kazakhstan desire to stay or leave Kazakhstan differ from those expressed by undergraduate students from Kazakhstan studying abroad. Based on focus groups in Shanghai, China and Moscow, Russia and individual interviews of students who are studying in Europe and the US factors such as the price of education, the quality of education, the difficulty of gaining admission to university in Kazakhstan are given as reasons for studying abroad in Russia and China. For students studying in Europe and the United States the quality of education is the major reason for the choice. Some individuals interviewed who study in Europe and the US expressed what we found in our surveys that democratic values also influence their destination of the US and Europe.

Final Observations

Our survey results suggest that it is important to recognize the heterogeneity among university students in Kazakhstan. As students become fluent in English, their desire for study and work abroad will increase. Information about other countries influences the choice to stay or leave Kazakhstan, more than the type of media used, although television continues to make a desire to leave Kazakhstan less likely among some ethnic Kazakhs. Somewhat surprisingly, worries about future jobs make a desire to leave more likely among Kazakhs, than among ethnic Russians who are citizens of Kazakhstan. Thus, the economy has a greater effect on the mobility of the eponymous population, than on ethnic Russians. As ethnic Kazakhs who use Russian, more than Kazakh begin to switch to Kazakh, they are more likely to remain in Kazakhstan, but

there is still no effect on ethnic Russians. The choice of destination for those already at university is influenced by religiosity and democratic values, while the desire to leave is not.

A policy decision faces Kazakhstan. To be competitive Kazakhstan requires a well-educated population in which English is a key to global competition. Language and information has an impact on mobility decisions, while values may influence destination choices. The Bolashak program has addressed part of the issue of potential 'brain drain' by focusing on post-graduate education, but perhaps the other lesson learned from our survey is that an additional investment in quality education in Kazakhstan needs to be made.

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