

Life Course Research

RESEARCH

Ruth Achenbach

Return Migration Decisions

A Study on Highly Skilled
Chinese in Japan



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Life Course Research

Herausgegeben von

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Ruth Achenbach

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A Study on Highly Skilled
Chinese in Japan

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Editor's Note

This book is part of our series *Life Course Research* (Springer VS Research). In this series we publish empirical studies – in both English and German – which focus on transitions along the life course. Promoting comparative and international research is a matter of particular concern for us. The work by Ruth Achenbach looks at migration decisions over the life course and fits therefore very well into this series. In a number of respects, however, it also adds new dimensions.

First, with its focus on East Asia it enlarges our European geographical horizon. It also points to rather little-known aspects of other cultures and life styles. Looking at highly skilled Chinese in Japan, it focuses on processes of mobility between countries that represent different levels of development. Second, in methodological respect this work is an exploratory, in-depth study whereas most of the previous volumes of this series have provided tests of established hypotheses on the basis of large-scale representative data.

The central interest of this study is to understand why some of the immigrants return while others decide to stay and settle in their host country – even if this might mean a deviation from their original intentions. It is not a coincidence that questions of decisions are at the center of the analysis. Not only in the field of migration has life course research been interested in model-based analyses of individual decisions against the background of structural restrictions. However, this study avoids simplistic decisions models when exploring the combined context of career stages, family life and personal life styles. A particular focus is on shifting priorities over the life course and events that may trigger particular decisions.

The comparatively small, non-representative sample may not deliver definite quantitative estimates but the results may well be used to conceptualize larger, confirmatory studies in the future. This work is also a good example for the mediating role of the life course perspective. In fact, mainstream life course research aims for a middle ground between over-stylized explanations and the recording of idiosyncratic life histories. It wants to go beyond any simplistic structural view, but also upholds the claims of valid measurement and systematic explanation. A major tool to bridge this gap is accounting for changing life situations by studying the impact of defined life events. Ruth Achenbach's study contains numerous suggestions what kind of events need to be considered when analyzing migration decisions.

This book can be recommended to scholars interested in migration or the life course in general and student and labor migration in East Asia in particular. I hope many will read and benefit from it.

Steffen Hillmert

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Preliminary Remarks

Japanese and Chinese names are given in their original order, starting with the surname followed by the first name, and transcribed using the Hepburn system and Pinyin, respectively, unless authors chose a different spelling or order. The same transliteration method is chosen for Japanese and Chinese terms.

In the bibliography, standard style is followed in that surnames are given before first names, separated by comma.

When referring to single agents and their actions, male pronouns are used for brevity, which, unless otherwise specified, refer to all genders.

1 Introduction

Migration in pursuit of labor is a global phenomenon: according to estimates of the United Nations Population Division (UNPD 2013), there are 232 million international migrants worldwide, and 90% of movement is the result of at least one family member seeking employment, the International Labour Organization (ILO 2013) suggests. The ILO expects the numbers of work-related population flows to rise due to increasing levels of globalization, demographic transitions in industrialized nations creating a demand for foreign labor, but also because conflicts and climate change may further accelerate migration. Developed regions hosted 59% of all international migrants, increasing 6% since 1990 (UNPD 2013). National governments devise policies to control migration, seeking to attract skilled workers to fill gaps on their labor markets to become or remain competitive in the global economy, while closing the door to large-scale immigration of less skilled workers or refugees (Cornelius and Tsuda 2004: 4).

The rise in international migrants is particularly strong in Asia: it hosted 71 million migrants in 2013, gaining an average of 1.6 million migrants per annum since 2000 (UNPD 2013). Yet, despite the trends of accelerating migration and of its direction to developed nations, the share of registered foreign residents in Japan stands at about 1.7% in 2015 (MIC 2016a; 2016b; MOJ 2016), a relatively low figure among OECD nations (OECD 2015).¹ Japan has long been considered an outlier among industrialized nations that filled their demand for labor (of any skill level) with foreign workers (Tsuda and Cornelius 2004: 439); however, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Japan turned into a destination for international labor migration (Behaghel and Vogt 2006: 115; Douglass and Roberts 2000: 6–7; Lie 2001: 10), thereby becoming a “recent country of immigration” (Tsuda 2006). Labor migration to Japan is discussed in a variety of contexts: Japan’s demographic ageing and, as a result, an ensuing general labor demand, as well as a way to increase Japan’s international economic competitive strength through the inclusion of highly skilled workers.² Under current official policy, only highly

¹ For example, in the UK, foreign citizens accounted for 8% of the population and for almost 9% in Germany in 2014 (OECD 2015).

² A first immigration debate in the 1980s focused on labor demand in all sectors of the economy, while a second immigration debate around the year 2000 revolved around Japan’s demographic change and was held with a sense of crisis (Iguchi 2001; Vogt 2013: 23). Despite these two peaks in the Japanese discourse on immigration, a look at the scale of migration to Japan shows that the inflow was continuous (see Chiavacci (2011: 13–17) on the fragmentation of the immigration debates).

skilled are allowed to enter the country as labor migrants and permanent settlement is not permitted (Tsuda and Cornelius 2004: 449–450), yet workers of various skills levels and lengths of stay reside in Japan.³ Of the roughly 2.17 million registered foreign nationals in Japan in 2015, more than 30% held Chinese nationality (MOJ 2016). Among the group of international students, Chinese even composed more than 50% (MIC 2014).⁴ Student migration has been one way of importing skilled labor to Japan since Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro announced the goal of accepting 100,000 foreign students as part of his internationalization agenda in 1984 (Chiavacci 2012: 32; Liu-Farrer 2009a).

The People's Republic of China (PRC, hereafter referred to as China) is the main sending nation of international students but increasingly also attracts students from abroad (UNESCO UIS 2014).⁵ China is in the midst of transition, not only economically, but also in terms of migration and demography. China has overtaken Japan as the second largest economy in the world (World Bank 2015), but within China, regions differ strongly by development levels. Internal migration is the highest world-wide (ILO n.d.), an estimated number of almost 274 million internal migrants in 2014 move in pursuit of labor (NBS PRC 2015), usually from Western and Central China to coastal regions. China was the main sending nation of migrants to OECD countries in 2012 (OECD 2015), yet, “a new trend of immigration *to* the fast-developing country is emerging” (Skeldon 2011, italics in original). As a result of its one-child policy, China is now also facing a looming labor shortage, struggling to fill the demand of its growing economy on the one hand, and to care for its aging population on the other. National and local governments in China have implemented policies to attract investment and return movement of highly skilled overseas Chinese to aid the growth, but also the restructuring of the Chinese economy (Nyíri 2005: 156; Zhuang 2013: 39). Despite national and local government initiatives to both attract talent from abroad and investing in the “development” of talent within its borders,⁶ a trend of elite emigration (including skilled workers) can be made out (Rietig 2014). Despite their structural differences, Japan and China face challenges they both seek to alleviate by increasing the share of skilled workers within their national

³ Almost two-thirds of registered foreigners hold long-term visas (MOJ 2016; Vogt and Achenbach 2012: 15); as Ayako Komine (2014) points out, some visas include the option of long-term residence, a trend that was further strengthened in the point-system for highly skilled immigration that started in 2012. See Section 4.2 on Japan's migration policy and the gap to its immigration reality.

⁴ In 2011, when fieldwork was conducted in Japan, Chinese made up almost one third of foreign nationals in Japan with 674,879 registered Chinese (MIC 2012a; MOJ 2012a). More than half resided in the Tokyo area (MHLW 2012; MIC 2012c).

⁵ China ranked ninth among receiving nations of mobile students in 2012 (UNESCO UIS 2014).

⁶ This refers to the National Medium- and Long-term Talent Development Plan (2010–20) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the State Council in June 2010 (Wang 2010).

boundaries.⁷ These challenges include a looming labor shortage, a stagnating economy in Japan's case and, in China, an economy in transition as the industrial structure is changing from labor-intensive to capital intensive industries.

International mobility of the highly skilled has attracted increasing attention from scholars, politicians and human resource departments of global companies alike.⁸ Highly skilled migration contains the promise of contributing to development in countries of origin and of destination; during their time in the host country, agents expand and contribute their knowledge and use it to develop the economy, while sending remittances to the home country. Upon return, they bring knowledge and money with them, adding to the development of the economy in the home country (see, for example, Grubel and Scott 1966; Hunger 2003: 58).⁹ Despite this seemingly only positive effect on economies, migrants and their families, the question of how to attract the best brains in the “global war for talent” (Chiavacci 2012) remains a mystery. Migration theory reduces the complexity of decisions behind mobility behavior of the highly skilled to either economic or household rationales, while government incentives often fail to attract the targeted migrants.¹⁰ This is problematic as a mismatch between migrants' skills and demand of labor markets increases the likelihood of deskilling, and developing countries may lack workers of certain skills while these are in oversupply in developed countries. An overemphasis on skills, the myth of the transferability of human capital (Faist 1997: 188; Favell, Feldblum and Smith 2006: 17; Meyer 2001), and the focus on economic motivations of highly skilled in the discourse on the mobility of “brains” fails to disentangle the factors influential in locational decisions of this group, ignoring, for example, migrants' well-being. Most research has focused on the migration of highly skilled to OECD countries, buying into the one-way “permanent settlement migration paradigm” (Hugo 2003), while the phenomenon of increasing rates of return migration to less developed economies puts the focus on skills and economic rationales to the test. This perspective fails to reflect the reality of highly skilled migrants' mobility decisions, a gap that is addressed in this study.

⁷ Since the 2000s especially, various Japanese bodies pushed for increased immigration of highly skilled workers, culminating in a point-based visa system for the highly skilled introduced in 2012 (Komine 2014). The Chinese national as well as local governments have also increased their efforts to attract the return and settlement of highly skilled since the late 1970s; Chinese and Japanese policies are addressed in further detail in Chapter 4.

⁸ The term “highly skilled” is contested because definitions either focus on tertiary degrees (Chaloff and Lemaître 2009: 4) or occupation (including students, OECD 2002: 2); a more comprehensive approach is to differentiate by qualification, activity, sector and occupation (Mahroum 2000: 24). The discourse on “highly skilled” migration is mapped in Section 2.1.5.

⁹ Till Kathmann (2014: 169) argues that the aspect of development of countries of origin, claimed to be new by scholars of circular migration, has already been part of the rationale behind guest worker policies in Germany in the 1960s.

¹⁰ See Jeroen Doomernik, Rey Koslowski and Dietrich Thränhardt (2009) for a critical discussion of selective immigration policy as a means to attract highly skilled migrants.

In order to contribute to the understanding of the mobility of highly skilled between countries of different development levels, this study examines settlement and return migration decisions of highly skilled Chinese in Japan.¹¹ The setting of the study in Asia is particularly intriguing, as it is a dynamic region both in terms of economic development and migration streams. The number of Chinese students returning has increased particularly after the global financial crisis of 2007–08, during which China’s economy continued to grow (Luo 2013/02/28; Wang 2013; Wang, Tang and Li 2014).¹² The juxtaposition of Japan’s economy in recession and China’s economic growth provides a fitting case to examine the influence of economic but also other career-related considerations, such as applicability of skills or technological development level. The other sphere that is hypothesized to be influential in mobility decisions relates to private matters. Factors from the private sphere include family considerations but also lifestyle preferences; for this, Japan and China are interesting cases due to their differences in political systems and social institutions.

The principal research question guiding the analysis is: why do some highly skilled Chinese migrants stay in Japan while others return (or move on)? The study adopts an explorative, mixed-method approach. Based on empirical data, immigration and labor market participation statistics and a broad literature review on decision making and migration, an individual-level decision-making model is presented. It traces both the process of and influential factors in the international migration and settlement decisions of Chinese students, highly skilled workers and entrepreneurs both during their stays in Japan and upon return to China. While definitions of the term “highly skilled” differ in that they either focus on tertiary degrees alone or include occupation, in this study the term refers to students of top-level Japanese and Chinese universities, as well as entrepreneurs and workers in management positions mainly in the fields of IT, finance, research, law and engineering. The term “migrant” for the purposes of this study refers to agents who have resided outside of their country of birth for at least one year (for purposes of education or work), while the term “return migrant” specifies agents who return to their country of origin to stay for at least one year (see also United Nations Statistics Division 1998: 18, 95). Migration theory is slow to move its focus from the concept of settlement to temporary migration, that is, away from unidirectional movement for the purpose of settlement (Hugo 2003). This is in sharp contrast to conceptualizations of highly skilled as hyper mobile, job-driven and usually single (male) agents (Favell, Feldblum and Smith 2006; Kofman and Raghuram 2005:

¹¹ Chinese in this study refers to nationals of the PRC, excluding nationals from the Republic of China (Taiwan).

¹² As Luo Keren (2003: 295) points out, “more and more jobs and opportunities will be provided in China and the Asia Pacific region where exploration and ambition can be fused with economic development. Therefore, overseas Chinese with their specialties are bound to take the lead in return migration and there is already a tendency toward this.”

151–153; Willis and Yeoh 2000), leaving a gap in the theoretical explanations of the mobility of highly skilled. This study addresses this gap, and examines the locational decision-making processes of men and women in different family- and career-related life phases. It integrates sociological and economic perspectives; political frameworks also play a role. Most of the 112 participants of the study entered Japan with temporary intentions, yet, as is reflected by the share of Chinese in Japan on long-term visas, intentions of length of stay change over time. The underlying research question of this study is therefore: why do some highly skilled Chinese migrants to Japan stick to their original plan of length of stay and others deviate from it? This is subdivided into the questions of how agents make locational decisions and which factors are influential in the process. This study provides answers to the first question by designing an individual-level migration decision-making model and to the second by analyzing the factors agents cite as influential and decisive for their decisions.

The novelty of the approach lies in the comprehensive model of migration decision-making throughout different life phases. It addresses real-life decision-making processes. Decisions about return and settlement happen not only at previously defined points in time (after graduating from university, for example), but may be solutions to a specific problem or a tool to achieve certain goals. Triggered by an event, an agent enters a four-stage decision-making process, consisting of situation analysis, option evaluation, planning, and action. The model redefines stages in locational decision-making processes and identifies new phases within the first stage, as is mapped out in Chapter 5.¹³ The focus lies on participants' perceptions of where they can achieve individually defined goals, highlighting the definition and framing of problems as well as the evaluation of options. The conceptualization of return migration decision-making processes offers one explanation for existing gaps in migration theory: why some agents consider migration as an option and others do not *and* why some deviate from their original migration intention.

Although migration impacts all areas of life, as agents usually start new jobs, move away from their social networks into an unknown environment and form new contacts, migration theory is divided into explanations from economics, sociology, political science etc. (Brettell and Hollifield 2000: 2; Massey *et al.* 1994: 700–701). Empirical results show that the factors agents consider in their decisions about where to move or settle come from three spheres: career, family, and lifestyle preferences. This ties in to the competing explanations from economics (Kröhnert 2007; Massey *et al.* 1993: 432–434; Piore 1979; Sjaastad

¹³ Sociologist Stefanie Kley's (2009) conceptualization of domestic migration consists of three stages: considering migration, planning, and realizing it. The subject of the study at hand are return or settlement decisions; for these decisions, an additional stage needs to be included to understand under which circumstances agents consider migration and when they choose another option to solve a specific problem or reach a goal.

1962; Todaro 1969), sociological approaches focusing on family migration (Adams 2004; Chiang and Hsu 2005; Cooke 2008; de Haas and Fokkema 2010; Harbison 1981; Lawson 1998; Michielin, Mulder and Zorlu 2008; Tabor 2014; Willis and Yeoh 2000) and lifestyle migration (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014). The weight of these spheres differs over the life course. Agents are hypothesized to return if they see an individually defined balance of these three spheres (at certain points in life, goals from one sphere may take precedence) in China and they perceive to have control over their behavior. While career considerations take center stage in initial migration, family factors and lifestyle preferences gain in importance over the course of migration and over the life course. At life phase transitions, the likelihood of considering migration rises (Kley 2009: 470). The study examines how the factors that participants consider in their locational decisions change with life phases and how they differ by gender as well as occupation. This analysis provides clues as to why some agents return and others settle and why agents deviate from their original intention over the course of migration.

In order to answer the questions of how and why highly skilled agents decide to return to China or settle in Japan, the study adopted an explorative approach: in semi-structured interviews conducted in Japan and China, agents reflected on the process of migration decision making, but also factors influential in locational decisions as well as their perception of their situation in career and private lives.¹⁴ Other empirical data stem from expert interviews with ministry, local government and university officials, staff of human resource departments of international and Japanese companies, as well as scholars and members of civil society organizations. Literature on migration and decision-making theory, as well as relevant literature on Chinese international and return migration and circumstances shaping migrants' lives in Japan are included as sources. The model draws on findings from naturalistic decision making scholars, who focus on decision-making processes surrounding ill-structured problems in uncertain dynamic environments, shaped by shifting goals and potentially multiple players (Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 7), to name but a few criteria for the application of this approach. The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data and their analysis, the inclusion of expert interviews, literature and official statistics adds to a holistic perspective on migration decisions of highly skilled Chinese in Japan.

¹⁴ This interviewing method was chosen so as to enable participants to bring up themes important to them but also to test the influence of factors identified in the literature. In addition, participants filled out a questionnaire on network composition and use of these contacts in Japan and China in order to understand the location-specific capital (factors from which an individual can only benefit in a particular place, including job-related factors such as a regular clientele, and social factors such as friendship networks, DaVanzo 1981: 116; DaVanzo and Morrison 1982: 4) and levels of integration of agents.

The study is structured as follows: After a review of theoretical explanations of migration and of decision-making, the individual-level migration decision-making model is introduced in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 depicts the methodological approach to data collection and analysis, while Chapter 4 provides information on the history and current characteristics of Chinese migration to Japan as well as return migration to China. Chapter 5 takes the reader through the stages of the decision-making process, while Chapter 6 quantifies the findings by spheres (career, family, and lifestyle preferences) and shows differences in their impact by groups (by life phase, gender, and occupation). Chapter 7 concludes the study and integrates qualitative and quantitative findings.

This study contributes to the body of research on migration and decision-making theory on the one hand and its results deepen our understanding of what is important in highly skilled migrants' lives on the other. Understanding the decision-making process behind international migration provides a base for improving national and corporate policies as well as social support structures for migrants' well-being. The decision-making model based on the findings of this study contributes to general decision theory by redefining stages and identifying new phases in the decision-making process specifically for locational decisions. It addresses the gap left by quantitative studies that fail to explain under which circumstances potential migrants consider relocation. The study identifies events triggering a decision-making cycle potentially leading to migration, but sees migration as only one solution among others to ill-structured problems and therefore analyzes which combination of factors leads to the choice of relocation. This study focuses on the phase of option evaluation in particular, examining migrants' assessment of the influence of a variety of options on primary goals against political, economic, social and private constraints. The study's redefinition and reevaluation of the sequence of phases in the decision-making cycle adds to decision-making theory, while the examination of return migration decisions and influential factors in this process contributes a new perspective to migration theory, integrating two strings of research. Beyond its contribution to academic research, the findings of this study can be used to improve national and local initiatives to attract highly skilled workers by governments as well as companies. If migrants are able to put their internationally acquired skills to use, they can add to a region's economic growth and competitive ability. For the migrants themselves, this is an important aspect as well, as the ability to use most if not all of their skills adds to their well-being. An additional focus on family factors and lifestyle preferences helps understand highly skilled migrants' location preferences and can be used to design comprehensive supportive measures.

2 Return Migration Decision Making: Theoretical Considerations

The goal of this study is to answer the questions of why and how highly skilled first-time international migrants decide to settle or to move again, specifically, to return. Theoretical approaches from the fields of migration research and decision making promise insight into this issue. This chapter integrates (return) migration theory with decision-making models, while focusing especially on issues of gender and shifting priorities during the life course. Migrants make various decisions that influence return migration or settlement, such as employment decisions or reproductive choices to name but a few. In all of these decisions, they are influenced by factors from various levels.

In order to explain international migration, three components need to be examined: “the effects of properties of the system on the constraints or orientations of actors; the actions of actors who are within the system; and the combination or interaction of those actions, bringing about the systemic behavior” (Coleman 1990: 27). Migration theory has adopted this conceptualization in macro-, meso- and micro-level explanations.¹⁵ A migrant acts within a larger social, political, cultural and economic system that shapes his values and priorities. Based on his priorities and values as well as his perception of the larger environments, an agent makes decisions about how to solve problems or achieve his goals. In an effort to explain individual behavior, scholars have either used attributes of the individuals and of their social environments or have focused on internal processes (Coleman 1990: 1).¹⁶ This study does both: it focuses on characteristics of the individuals, their social (and economic) environments as well as their internal processes.

¹⁵ James Coleman’s conceptualization of macro–micro linkages is often referred to as “Coleman’s boat.” Different levels play a role in migration in that a migrant (micro-level) is influenced by larger frameworks (macro-level) and by others’ actions (meso-level). In turn, his actions impact the macro-level. This conceptualization is explored in further detail in Section 2.1.

¹⁶ The study draws from individual-level data, yet “social theory continues to be about the functioning of social systems of behavior” (Coleman 1990: 1). The individual approach risks not being able to explain developments at the system level (Coleman 1990: 6). As the sample examined in this study is not representative, the study can only propose a model for the individual level that needs to be tested and expanded to fit the system level (see Coleman (1990: 6) for ways to cover the transition from micro- to macro-level explanations; he criticizes that scholars use “aggregation” and the concept of the “representative agent” to “paper over” weaknesses in linking the two levels).

The following sections first map factors that migration theory holds responsible for movement, followed by an outline of decision-making theory. The third part of the chapter presents the model adopted in this study to explain return migration decisions.

2.1 Migration Theory

At the center of this study stand the questions of how and why migrants decide to settle or to return to their home countries (or to move on to other countries). The United Nations Statistics Division (1998: 95) defines return migrants as “persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants (whether short-term or long-term) in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year.” This definition has attracted criticism due to its focus on nationality, which would exclude naturalized citizens from the inclusion in “return migration” statistics (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008: 164–165). The definition is therefore amended for the purposes of this study to designate *persons returning to their country of birth after having been international migrants (whether short-term or long-term) in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year*. Return migration has received only little academic attention. It is reduced to being a result of either a) the failure to meet the goals of initial migration (Cassarino 2004) or b) a lack of integration in the host country, or c) of the preference for one’s home country, or d) achieving the objective of migration (for example, savings or qualifications for occupations at home, see Dumont and Spielvogel 2008: 163). Only gradually did explanations of return migration start to include family factors such as the impact of children on return (Dustmann 2003). Yet, these conceptualizations remain on the surface and fail to adequately address the direction and the timing of mobility. Initial migration motivation is considered important to explain return or onward movement (Cerase 1974), and approaches used to explain first-time migration are mirrored in return migration explanations. In the following, the development of migration theory is briefly sketched to show parallel and diverging lines of arguments for different types of migration.

Research on migration has long attracted criticism as it allegedly lacks a sound theoretical basis (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1970: 46; Kröhnert 2007: 1). Scholars of various disciplines have addressed migration, including demography, geography, sociology, political science and economics. However, interdisciplinary exchange only rarely happens and much research remains within its disciplinary boundaries, ignoring findings from other fields (Brettell and Hollifield 2000: 2, Massey *et al.* 1994: 700–701). Concerning efforts to integrate different approaches to form an encompassing theory, Alejandro Portes (1998: 27) even goes as far as to say that any attempt at a “grand theory of immigration [...] would be futile,” as

it risks being too vague due to the disparate nature of the individual fields of migration theory and differences in levels of analysis (see also Arango 2004: 15). Despite this negative assessment of the possibility to combine various approaches, this study attempts to integrate various theoretical perspectives on voluntary labor migration. Although some of the concepts described in the following sections have been developed for internal migration, their findings are checked for applicability for return migration of Chinese highly skilled. The following paragraphs sketch the development of migration theory and give an overview over dominant perspectives from different disciplines.

Statistician Ernest G. Ravenstein in 1885 was the first one to formulate “laws of migration” about who migrates, distance and direction of migration and the process of settlement. With this attempt, he contradicted the then prevailing understanding of migration as an anarchic process rooted in human nomadic nature and inspired further research (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1970: 46; Kalter 2008: 17; 2003: 328). Subsequent research initially focused on the macroeconomic explanations of migration, specifically on differences in sending and receiving countries (Kröhnert 2007: 1–2). One example is dual labor market theory that explains movement between labor markets by their structural demands, as receiving countries may have become structurally dependent on cheap migrant labor (Piore 1979). Neoclassical economics on a macro level explains migration flows with wage differentials, employment opportunities and conditions, labor market demands as well as costs of migration (Massey *et al.* 1993: 432–434). In contrast, Michael P. Todaro’s (1969) and Larry A. Sjaastad’s (1962) models of individual choice operate on the micro level of neoclassical economics. Sjaastad (1962: 92) seeks to place the phenomenon of migration in an “investment context” (into one’s human capital), while Todaro (1969: 138) stressed the importance of “expected” income differentials. Potential migrants weigh material and immaterial costs and (future) benefits of movement and see migration as an investment in their human capital on which to cash in at a later point in time.

Sjaastad (1962: 91–92) points out that migration does not affect the moving person alone, but also his social networks, as well as the receiving and sending societies and economies as a whole. In contrast to Sjaastad’s and especially Todaro’s approach to income maximization of individuals, the New Economics of Labor Migration approach shifted the focus towards seeing migration as a household strategy aimed at diversifying sources of income and thereby minimizing risk (Stark and Levhari 1982). Although microeconomic theory allows for non-monetary factors influencing individuals’ decisions of whether to migrate, it has yet to identify those factors and show how factors are connected.¹⁷ The reduction of migration to an investment in human capital or as a means toward

¹⁷ Julie DaVanzo (1981: 92–93) points out that non-economic factors are harder to operationalize and therefore difficult to include in microeconomic models of migration.

income maximization also fails to explain why some persons move and others do not, preferences of destination, or, related to this, return movement from developed to developing nations (Arango 2004: 19; Kalter 2008: 18). A model with explanatory power needs to combine macro- and micro-level approaches.

In this line of thinking, Douglas S. Massey (1998: 50) disagrees with Portes' strong statement on the impossibility of an encompassing theory and argues that an explanation of international migration must account for the following four factors:

“a treatment of the structural forces that promote emigration from developing countries; a characterization of the structural forces that attract immigrants into developed nations; a consideration of the motivations, goals, and aspirations of the people who respond to these structural forces by becoming international migrants; and a treatment of the social and economic structures that arise to connect areas of out and in-migration.”

Massey suggests an integration of approaches explaining the beginnings of migration (structural factors and migrants' aspirations) and explanations of how migration flows perpetuate. He thereby combines characteristics of sending and receiving nations, transnational structures built by different generations of migrants and perceptions and goals of the migrants themselves.

One explanation for the perpetuation of migration flows is network theory: its logic is that potential migrants rely on former and current migrants and the social networks and information they provide in the destination country to reduce costs and risks (Castles 2000: 115; 2003: 21; Hammar *et al.* 1997; Massey *et al.* 1993: 448–449; Meyer 2001: 93). It is a theory from the meso level, which focuses on “social relations (social ties) between individuals in kinship groups (e.g. families), households, neighbourhoods, friendship circles and formal organisations” (Faist 1997: 188). At its center stands the assumption of social capital,¹⁸ on which migrants can cash in: social contacts provide information on jobs, housing or cultural norms and in this way social capital can be transformed into “financial, human, cultural and political capital” (Faist 1997: 199).¹⁹ The presence of social contacts in a potential migration destination thereby explains the choice of destination.²⁰ Each movement changes the context of subsequent migrants' decisions, often leading to rising numbers of migrants (see cumulative causation, Massey *et al.* 1993: 451–454). Unlike previous conceptualizations of immigrants who immersed themselves fully and solely in the host society (see Alba and Nee 1997; Berry 1997; Esser 1980 for models of integration), migrants

¹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu (1980) defines social capital as the benefits a person can derive from his social network. Coleman (1988) conceptualizes social capital as a shared good, of which trust forms a constitutive element (see also Putnam 1993).

¹⁹ See Niels Oelgart (2006) for a critical perspective on the use of social capital as an explanatory variable for many phenomena. In addition to social contacts' practical support during the early stages of migration, especially ethnic networks provide emotional stability at later stages (Achenbach 2015).

²⁰ Yet, the presence of social contacts does not explain the volume of migration (Faist 1977: 188).

remain connected to their home country's society linking it with the host society, a concept Linda Basch, Linda Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1994: 3–7) have termed transnationalism.

In addition to economic and social factors on micro and macro levels, political factors also play a role, but the influence of governments on migration and settlement has often been overlooked (Arango 2004: 20–21; Hollifield 2000; Massey 1998: 50). Governmental legislation influences who may legally enter, work or settle in and leave a country, but also which sectors of the economy are boosted with subsidies or favorable legislation.²¹ It remains unclear, though, which structural factors impact migrants at what time and in which ways.

This study attempts to integrate economic, political science and sociological approaches by focusing on decision-making processes of Chinese highly skilled. The author argues that the perception of political, cultural, economic and social frameworks (macro and meso level) shape an individual's assessment of the potential outcomes of movement (micro level). This section reviews relevant literature from migration theory that addresses decision making in migration, agency of migrants in relocation decisions (household and gender perspectives), timing of migration in the life course, the influence of skills on decision-making processes and the special case of return migration.

2.1.1 *Decision Making in Migration*

The migration theories sketched above have neglected to create a model of migration decision making. Although migration is increasingly seen as a process as opposed to an event (Kley 2009: 53; Kley and Mulder 2010: 74), the *decision-making process* has largely been overlooked. Especially the macro perspectives ignored agency of migrants and their families and reduced their decisions to submission to the attraction of labor markets in developed countries, while micro- and meso-level explanations assumed rational considerations of risk reduction or income maximization. The choice of destination happened naturally in the footsteps of earlier migrants. Yet the questions of why some people move and others do not, of who makes the decision and which structural factors influence individuals (or families) in what manner remain unanswered.

James M. Beshers (1967: 133) identified movement as the outcome of a decision-making process that is affected by social and structural constraints, thereby combining factors of different levels. He does not present a model of how decisions are made, but points to important factors various individuals have to consider. Among these are household composition and gender, labor market

²¹ Most migration research from the viewpoint of political science has focused on state's attempts to *control* immigration, to restrict its flows or to influence who enters the country (e.g. by point systems only allowing for skilled migrants to enter) (Cornelius *et al.* 2004).

structure and characteristics of one's occupation and housing markets (Beshers 1967: 133–139). In 1981, Gordon F. De Jong and Robert W. Gardner published the constitutive volume on international migration decision making, in which they include an extensive literature review and articles from various disciplines. In order to explain migration *decisions*, De Jong and James T. Fawcett (1981: 47) suggest a value expectancy model, in which the intention to migrate is the sum of “personally valued goals” (values) and expectancies (subjective probabilities). In terms of sequence, potential migrants are affected by long- and short-term factors on all levels forming a migration motivation. Once the decision is made, a person will move (although they account for intervening variables deterring movement). A decision is seen as a single event at a certain point in time, a concept to be critically evaluated in Section 2.2.²²

De Jong and Fawcett (1981: 53) put the individual at the center of their model, although they assume macro-level factors to shape “family-based microlevel decision making” (see Section 2.1.2. on household perspectives for a discussion of decision-making units).²³ The individual sees migration as an instrument for achieving goals that depend on subjective values.²⁴ An agent weighs a number of goals and the effects of migration on them before making a decision. Goals include wealth, status, affiliation, comfort, stimulation, autonomy, and morality (De Jong and Fawcett 1981: 57). Two other categories influence migration behavior in addition to the formed intention: indirect influences on micro, meso and macro levels and also constraints and facilitators that intervene during the decision-making process (De Jong and Fawcett 1981: 56). They explain that the following three themes influence the decision maker indirectly as “background” factors in his decision-making process and subsequent migration behavior: social norms (e.g. gender roles), personality traits (e.g. risk taking propensity) and opportunity structure differentials in place of origin and destination (De Jong and Fawcett 1981: 55). Migration behavior also differs between potential migrants by *demographic variables* such as life phase, family size, employment, house ownership or migration history (De Jong and Fawcett 1981: 53). Intervening and facilitating factors include changes in family composition, health or support from one's network and unanticipated events (De Jong and Fawcett 1981: 56).²⁵

²² See also Jacqueline Adams (2004: 470) for criticism of this conceptualization, who points out that decision-making processes do not end with a decision but continue and are renegotiated.

²³ Oded Stark (1984) has strongly criticized the De Jong and Gardner's volume for its assumption of the decision-making unit being the individual and not the family, which forms the basis of the New Economics of Labor Migration approach (Stark and Levhari 1982).

²⁴ Expectancy theory had first been applied to a case study of migration by Martin M. Chemers, Roy Ayman and Carol Werner in 1978. They combined expectancy theory described by Victor H. Vroom (1964) with, among others, Beshers' (1967) conceptualization of migration decisions.

²⁵ De Jong and Fawcett (1981: 57) criticize that even the expanding literature on micro-level explanations mainly focused on individuals' economic considerations as determinants of migration.

The model is useful as a general outline for an individual's forming of a migration intention; however, it leaves much to speculation when it comes to the connection between behavior and intention (Goodman 1981: 133). Gardner (1981: 65) in the same volume (De Jong and Gardner 1981) points out this weakness by stating that it is necessary to differentiate between a desire and an intention to move and the act itself.²⁶ He presents a micro-level decision-making model and includes macro-level factors. As one of few scholars of migration decision making (see also Brown and Sanders 1981: 151; DaVanzo 1980: 2; Goodman 1981: 140), he points out that the individual has imperfect knowledge and only subjective assessment of macro-level factors (Gardner 1981: 63). Crucial points for decision making are values, perception of place-related factors,²⁷ objective facilitators or constraints to migration as well as their perception (Gardner 1981: 63–83). Gardner (1981: 88) himself points out that more research is necessary to understand how factors influence the different decision-making stages.

Frank Kalter (2008: 18) propagates a subjective expected utility (SEU) model in order to combine macro- and micro-level approaches.²⁸ By focusing on migration decisions of subjective actors, non-economic factors as well as structural determinants can be integrated. He divides the process of migration decision making into considering, planning and realizing movement (Kalter 1997), thereby laying an explicit focus on the stages before migration.²⁹ Consideration and planning differ in the level of commitment: in the consideration phase people toy with the idea of moving; when they “cross the Rubicon” (Kley 2011: 471; Kley and Mulder 2010: 76) they make a more binding decision and enter the planning stage. Scholars such as Rossi (1955), Kley (2009) and Clara H. Mulder (1993) analyze how life course events impact migration decision processes. The same factor may have a different impact in the phases of considering, planning and realizing migration (Kley and Mulder 2010: 76). However, there is still a gap in precisely how structural factors influence different migrant groups (Faist 1997: 194, 199; Kalter 2008: 19; Kley 2009: 20).

There have been very few studies integrating decision-making theory and migration. Classical decision-making theory (as will be shown in Section 2.2.1)

²⁶ Gardner (1981) draws from the conceptualization of decision-making phases by Warren B. Miller and R. Kenneth Godwin (1977: 95–98), who distinguish five stages: pre-awareness, awareness, consideration, implementation and adaptation.

²⁷ Relevant for migration decisions is whether potential migrants perceive another location to provide better chances of realizing individual goals; yet knowing of the opportunity differentials alone does not influence migration behavior (Huinink and Kley 2008; Kalter 1997; Kley 2011: 472–473). This resembles the model of place utility as explained by Wolpert (1965), explained in Section 2.1.6.

²⁸ The logic of the SEU model is the same as in expectancy theory, yet the SEU model is an elaborate model from the field of decision-making theory. It is discussed in detail in Section 2.2.1.

²⁹ Peter H. Rossi (1955) in his study of relocation processes in the metropolitan area of Philadelphia had laid the groundwork for a conceptualization of migration processes by distinguishing between an intention and a desire to move, differentiating levels of determination.

has increasingly been criticized for the basic assumption that the conceptualizations sketched above have in common: at their center stand rational actors. In migration theory as well, the concept of rationality based on perfect information has increasingly been questioned (Brown and Sanders 1981; DaVanzo 1980; Gardner 1981). In her study on migration to and from New Zealand, Psychologist Aidan S. Tabor applies the framework of naturalistic decision making (NDM), which specifically addresses limits of rationality, in explanations of migration (Tabor 2014: 9, 11). The concept of NDM is explained in greater detail in Section 2.2.2. She defines migration decisions as the result of a lengthy process shaped by individual differences and cultural norms, of a negotiation process between multiple players within a social (family) context whose results affect all players, and of goals that may change during the decision-making process (Tabor 2014: iii). Tabor (2014: 126) found that in *international* migration the question of whether to move was asked before the question of where to move. She identified the following factors as decisive for leaving one's country of origin: lifestyle and environmental factors,³⁰ work–life balance, considerations about careers and children's well-being. Migrants chose the destination (New Zealand) for environmental factors, cultural similarity, migration policy and society's openness towards migrants and quality of life (Tabor 2014: ii). She applies it to migrants of various skill levels, and, for the first time, outside of a US-American context. Her case study constitutes the first step toward integration of NDM and migration theory. Her approach and her findings have yet to be tested for return migration and in an Asian context.

2.1.2 Household Perspective

The question of exactly who it is that forms the decision-making unit of migration is contested. The New Economics of Labor Migration approach was the first to systematically include a household perspective in the explanation of migration, taking on an economic perspective of income diversification and maximization (Stark 1991; Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark and Levhari 1982).³¹ Stark (1984: 253) in a critical book review of De Jong and Gardner's (1981) volume suggests that family members make joint decisions in rural-to-urban migration, discussing each member's course of action.³² Sarah F. Harbison in that volume (1981) also

³⁰ Although "life-style" factors have been included in migration decisions before (see De Jong and Fawcett (1981: 33–34) for an overview), Tabor (2014) explicitly points to crime rates, and Guangqing Chi and Paul R. Voss (2005: 14) to biogeophysical factors such as climate and "beauty" (of scenery).

³¹ The New Economics of Labor Migration approach applies especially to migration from developing to developed countries (as in the latter, governmental programs and insurance markets reduce risk to household income (Cerutti and Massey 2001: 187; Massey *et al.* 1993: 436–440)).

³² Gardner (1981: 63) suggests looking at the migration decision to include several perspectives on how a decision is reached instead of putting the focus on individuals or households.

criticizes her colleagues by stating that family structure and function are more than just additional variables; the family's influence needs to be inserted into individual decision-making models. While she states that in some cases the family is the decision-making unit (Harbison 1981: 231, see also De Jong and Fawcett 1981: 50),³³ most often it is individuals influenced by family structure and function (see also Asis 2003: 106). It is necessary to look not only at family composition, but also at the gender and position of the decision maker in the household and in his life cycle (de Haas and Fokkema 2010: 543; Harbison 1981: 231–233; Willis and Yeoh 2000: 254), as well as income differences (Adams 2004: 476; Cooke 2008; Mincer 1978).

The meso level in the form of households and social networks connects the individual to macro structures (Faist 1997: 199; Haug 2008: 588). In opening the meso perspective to more contacts than just immediate and extended family, Sonja Haug (2008: 589, drawing mainly from P. Neal Ritchey's (1976: 389) conceptualization) proposes five functions of social networks in place of origin and destination. The *affinity* hypothesis proposes that integration into one's local community is a preventive factor for movement (Uhlenberg 1973). The contrasting *conflict* and *encouraging* hypotheses suggest that either conflicts in one's home community or encouragement by family members to move (e.g. to diversify sources of income) may act as push factors. The *information* and *facilitating* hypotheses state that a number of contacts already living in the potential destination provide information and facilitate adjustment by introducing new migrants to jobs and integrating them into their networks, thereby increasing the likelihood of migration (Hugo 1981).

This raises the question of who is part of the decision-making process in the family, household, extended kinship or social network. In addition to partners negotiating migration, Tabor (2014: 127) also points to social factors and the role of opportunity in migration decisions. It is not only partners or their children and parents that make the decisions together, but extended family (Lawson 1998: 43; Tabor 2014: 127, 129) or friends and members of one's community may influence the process as well (Adams 2004: 472). The presence of children greatly influences the decision-making process, as parents take the child's well-being into consideration when making migration decisions (Adams 2004: 475; Chiang and Hsu 2005; Michielin, Mulder and Zorlu 2008; Tabor 2014: 130).³⁴ This may be about location choice of the entire family, but also the choice of one parent to migrate alone in the search of higher wages etc., or a separation of the family for the safety of the child (see also Willis and Yeoh 2000: 258).

³³ De Jong and Fawcett (1981: 50) include "affiliation" in their enumeration of goals: the wish to be close to family and friends may overpower other goals and be the single reason for movement.

³⁴ See Thomas J. Cooke (2001) on how the presence of children negatively influences the labor market participation of migrant women.

2.1.3 Gender

Nicola Piper (2008: 1) strongly argues for the inclusion of a gender perspective in migration, as gender affects “most, if not all, aspects of migration.” Gender but also class, migration status and other factors influencing social stratification shape migrants’ experiences in both country of origin and destination. Yet migration theory in its beginnings conceptualized either a single male or genderless migrant, including women (if at all) as trailing spouses and caregivers with little agency in the decision-making process (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Cerutti and Massey 2001: 188; Cooke 2008: 256; Iredale and Guo 2003: 81; Pessar 1998: 53–54; Purkayastha 2005: 182). Although theory developed to include sex as a variable, the importance of gender, the socially constructed behaviors and roles ascribed to men and women, has not been systematically integrated (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 29).³⁵ This is especially noteworthy, because women since the 1960s have made up large parts of labor migrants, inducing Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller (2009: 12) to include the feminization of migration in their global migration trends. Starting with feminist scholars, researchers have started to reject the monolithic household view (that states that household members pool income for the benefit of the entire group, Lundberg and Pollak 2001; Mincer 1978: 750), because it neglected power hierarchies of gender and generation (Faist 1997: 191, 197; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Kofman and Raghuram 2005: 153; Lawson 1998: 42; Pessar 1998: 59; Radcliffe 1991). Women and men, even within the same household, form different networks and thereby have access to different resources (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 33). They are therefore not able to benefit in the same way from allegedly pooled resources. Also, households do not move unchanged from one location to another, as they can become transnational (Ho and Bedford 2008). Members may contribute actively to its income or indirectly through advice (Lawson 1998: 43). Migration may also change power structures within households by changing the gendered division of labor in the household as women take up paid employment and men and women are exposed to gender role ideology of another culture (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Lawson 1998: 40; Mahler and Pessar 2006: 33–34). Patricia R. Pessar (1998: 65) cites research that shows that women may favor staying in a new country to secure gender equity or new-found independence from parents and husband (e.g. Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994), yet men may favor return to regain privileges they have lost by moving.

Parental and marital households are just one concept in which gender role ideology shapes opportunity structure and thought processes. Single and married persons alike face gendered structural hurdles. One important factor that shapes migrants’ experience is participation in labor markets, and most often migrants

³⁵ In his conceptualization of migration decisions, Beshers (1967: 135–136) already recognized differences in power and concerns of husband and wife in migration decisions (although assuming a traditional division of power and responsibilities).

experience discrimination in the hiring process, remuneration or the jobs available to them. In addition to discrimination along gender lines, Pessar (1998: 69) advises to also look for discrimination linked to “ethnicity, nationality, class, and legal status” (see also Purkayastha 2005: 183). Legal status refers to e.g. visa category—states may restrict the employment of spouses of labor migrants (Boyd and Grieco 2003). For female migrants, in addition to being discriminated for being foreigners, thereby having less access to good jobs and less of a chance of upward social mobility, being female further restricts the type of job and income available to women (Halfacree 1995: 166–170; Pessar 1998: 63; Waldinger and Gilbertson 1994: 440). Yet it is not only the structure of the labor market on a macro level that influences the employment of men and women. Even in dual-earner couples, it is far more often the man who initiates family migration (Cooke 2008: 255; Gemici 2011: 29; see also Purkayastha 2005: 182; Willis and Yeoh 2000: 258).³⁶ Most often it is hard for the partner of a labor migrant to find suitable employment in the new labor market, thereby reducing income (Lichter 1983; Mincer 1978) and potentially leading to de-skilling.³⁷ If it is more often women who are “trailing migrants,” this pattern further aggravates gendered divisions of labor in households and labor markets (see also Halfacree 1995). Research on the selective group of highly skilled has revealed gender differences in the factors considered when deciding whether to take an international assignment (van der Velde, Bossink and Jansen 2005). The process of decision making and negotiation within families is inherently influenced by gender role ideology (Bielby and Bielby 1992: 1245; Cooke 2008; Ellis, Conway and Bailey 1996: 125). Further research is necessary to analyze the influence of gender role ideology in families’ migration negotiations, in the micro-, meso- and macro-level factors considered by men and women and how migration may change agency, power structures and perception of factors.

Although migration (especially feminist) research that stressed gender in the beginnings almost exclusively focused on female experiences, one must not overlook how gender role ideology in different cultures also affects the experiences of men. Gender roles, interaction between men and women, labor market participation of both sexes in the host society may differ tremendously from the patterns found in the society of origin. Men’s position in the parental household (e.g. as the first-born or youngest son) influences their opportunities to select migration themselves as a way to improve their lives or to contribute to household income. Gender role ideology in terms of working and family lives may influence men’s chances to participate actively in children’s education. They may acutely feel a loss of status and privilege when they enter another country shaped

³⁶ Eleonore Kofman and Parvati Raghuram (2005: 152) explain that this image may be a result of “cultures of migration” and that women may also initiate migration (see, for example, Teo 2003).

³⁷ See Daniel T. Lichter (1980) for the effects of married women’s occupation on the likelihood of movement of households.

by different gender role ideology, discriminatory hiring practices and impeded upward social mobility (Pessar 1998: 65). Yet, masculinities are not homogeneous and may become more flexible in the course of migration, influencing gender relations in the work place and the household (Hibbins 2005: 178–179; Kofman and Raghuram 2005: 153).

2.1.4 *Life Course*

In a study on relocation processes within the metropolitan area of Philadelphia, Rossi (1955) explained the inner-city moves with changes in household size and structure that also changed the amount of available income, such as marriage or birth of children. With the changes, different needs were created: for bigger housing, safe neighborhoods with good schools etc. (see also Geist and McManus 2008: 284). Rossi (1955) linked these processes with the housing market. The conceptualization of the life course started from the family cycle model (Glick 1947), which in turn starts with marriage and the founding of a two-person household. A phase of expansion (birth of children) ensues which in turn is followed by a shrinking (children leaving the household and starting a new family cycle). Any change in household composition through marriage, divorce or childbirth increases the likelihood to consider migration (Kley 2011: 473).³⁸ Scholars are divided on how residential mobility is influenced by changes in household composition in the long run (Clark and Huang 2003; Geist and McManus 2008: 284; Kulu 2008; Kulu and Milewski 2008; Li 2004; Mulder and Wagner 1993). While Rossi³⁹ originally connected relocation within cities with these family-related life-course events, this concept in migration research has gradually been expanded to also include the beginnings and ends of education and employment (Kley 2011; Kley and Mulder 2010: 77; Mulder 1993; Wagner 1989). During life course transitions, the likelihood to consider migration rises (Kley 2011: 470), however, distance associated with each move differs: for university education a person will move further away, while for cohabitation the distance is usually much shorter (Mulder 1993). Most research that adopts a life course perspective has focused on internal migration (e.g. Geist and McManus 2008; Huinink and Kley 2008; Kalter 1997; Kley 2011; 2009; Mulder 1993; Rossi 1955).⁴⁰ Yet, as the author (2012) has argued elsewhere, life course transitions and accompanying changing priorities also shape international migration.

³⁸ As Beshers (1967: 135) put it: “Thus we would expect fertility patterns to influence migration.” Refer also to Wolpert (1965) and Mincer (1978: 759), who mention the influence of life cycle events on migration. Case studies have confirmed their influence on return migration (Bailey and Ellis 1993).

³⁹ Rossi (1955: 175) does mention employment reasons for movement but focuses on changes in family composition during the family life cycle.

⁴⁰ One notable exception is Maria J. Perez-Patron’s (2012) dissertation.

The interplay between career- and family-related life course and its impact on priorities of migrants and their goals remains underresearched. Few studies adopt a life course perspective to explain migration within career- but also family-related terms (Achenbach 2012). One attempt to connect the two is the concept of “parallel careers.” Frans J. Willekens (1991; 1987) points out that migration and events in other “parallel careers” (such as occupational, housing or marital careers, Birg and Flöthmann 1990; Huinink and Wagner 1989; Wagner 1989) are often connected causally or instrumentally. Events that have been found to influence migration include starting university education (or vocational training), a new job, moving in with a partner, marriage and childbirth as well as divorce (Huinink and Kley 2008: 163; Kley 2011: 473; Kulu and Milewski 2007; Mulder 1993). Migration is a tool to achieve other goals, for example a more satisfying job.⁴¹ Migration and other goals therefore “occur as *synchronized events*” (italics in original, Mulder and Wagner 1993: 57; see also Wagner 1989). Yet, it is important to differentiate between single events and the circumstances they create, for example, between getting and being married (Mulder and Wagner 1993: 57). Being married changes a person’s status in a parallel career and may change priorities and decision-making patterns; it therefore has long-term consequences for migration intentions and behavior.

With life phase transitions, priorities but also responsibilities change, for example, as career-oriented singles may turn into family-oriented spouses. In the family life cycle, financial and social responsibilities increase with marriage and childbirth. When considering migration, its impact on family members factors into the decision.⁴² Another responsibility that becomes acute later in the life course is caring for elderly parents. It is important to note that with changes in household structure, power structures change as well. One partner may become dependent on the spouse’s income after childbirth or parents on their children in old age. In the career realm, partners’, children’s and parents’ needs may influence the type of job and employment or location (part-time work, choice of occupation) a migrant chooses. Spending patterns and lifestyle preferences may change with rising income and increasing family responsibilities. At the same time, career considerations also affect fertility patterns of migrants (such as the delaying of marriage and childbirth until return or until the completion of a career milestone, see Achenbach 2014). It is necessary to look at the life phase of the individual migrant who makes his decision in a larger family and career context.

Kley (2011; 2009) suggests dividing the relevant life phases for migration from a life course perspective into the phases of early adulthood (18–29-year-olds without children), family phase (18–50-year-olds with children under the age of

⁴¹ Note the study by Johannes Huinink, Sergi Vidal and Kley (2014) that focuses on persons who are willing to move and for whom this is positively connected to job mobility.

⁴² Hill Kulu and Nadja Milewski (2007: 581) point out that the proximity of parents is a factor migrants consider after childbirth, as migrants’ parents may help with child rearing.

10) and consolidation phase (30–50-year-olds without children or with children above the age of 10).⁴³ For the sample examined in this study, her life phase categories need to be adjusted and further subdivided as will be seen in Section 6.2.1. She found that priorities differed for each phase: in the phase of early adulthood, “opportunities for pursuing own interests” are more important than in other phases, while career considerations are most important for childless young adults, and family considerations dominate for persons in the family phase. However, in the consolidation phase most potential migrants weigh career *and* family factors (Kley 2011: 483; 2009: 153–176, 221–223, 241–243).⁴⁴ A model explaining migration decisions therefore needs to look at the influence of career- and family-related life phases and events on the different phases of the decision-making process (Huinink and Kley 2008: 181). Kley’s (2011; 2009) findings will be tested for international migration, and therefore, in different cultural contexts, of a specific groups of migrants, namely the highly skilled.

Besides looking at career- and family-related life course, another way to distinguish between life course events is to divide them by anticipated and unanticipated events. Previous studies using this distinction have not found a general pattern on how they affect migration decisions (de Groot *et al.* 2011: 50). Among anticipated events are marriage or childbirth, unanticipated events include unemployment or sudden illness. Unexpected events can also include external shocks such as political or environmental crises. These types of events may deter a person willing to move from acting on his intention, or become a trigger to consider moving (for example, unemployment could deter a migrant from moving into a more prestigious place, make him stay in his current location or move to a less prestigious place). Unanticipated events therefore generally become intervening variables in migration decision models.

2.1.5 *Highly Skilled Migrants*

Highly educated or highly skilled are reported to be more likely to move than less-skilled migrants (DaVanzo and Morrison 1982; Grubel and Scott 1967: 138). The dynamics behind this seemingly “unprecedented” mobility remain underresearched as migration theory has been slow to differentiate between labor

⁴³ Kley chose the age of 10 for children as this is when children enter secondary schools in Germany. For international migration, the decision whether children should enter the schooling system of the home or host country carries more weight. Therefore, the author chooses the age threshold of 6 years, as this equals elementary school entrance age. A further subdivision concerns the age and care needs of migrants’ parents. In addition, educational and occupational life phases need to be integrated. Kley (2009) included the career-related life phase by assuming a certain achievement with age, as completion of schooling and the beginning of a first job usually take place before the age of 30.

⁴⁴ Kalter (1997) has also pointed to the importance of social contacts in addition to career considerations for single migrants.

migration of different skill levels (Favell, Feldblum and Smith 2006: 1–2).⁴⁵ Those theories that do focus on the movement of highly skilled vary as much in focus as they do for general migration.

The definition of highly skilled is contested: in an OECD publication, Jonathan Chaloff and Georges Lemaître (2009: 4) use tertiary degrees as one way of distinguishing them,⁴⁶ while a different OECD (2002: 2) publication includes university students, information technology (IT) specialists, business executives and managers, researchers, and intra-company transferees, among others.⁴⁷ Khalid Koser and John Salt (1997: 287) point out that

“[being] a graduate is not in itself sufficient to be regarded as highly skilled in labour market terms, since many graduates are not employed in jobs requiring high-level expertise. Conversely, many people whose work is deemed to be highly skilled are not graduates. Skills can be acquired through experience rather than by education or training, and there is a strong case for distinguishing between skills-based and qualifications-based procedures for recognizing a migrant’s professional expertise.”

Nevertheless, governments attempt to “control” immigration and to distinguish between “unwanted” and more desirable, skilled migrants (Cornelius and Tsuda 2004: 4), by means of visa policy and the criterion of a college degree. They also differentiate the time frames that migrants of different skill levels are allowed to stay. Government-induced migration of the highly skilled includes migration through specifically designed policies or bi-/multilateral agreements; Robyn Iredale (2001; 1999) sees this as an attempt to fill demands on the labor market, as a reaction or an effort to shape the process of globalizing economies.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Much of migration theory has, in fact, been developed with a focus on the movement of low skilled workers. Douglas Massey (1998: 35) insists that while the movement of managers and other skilled personnel may be connected to the flow of capital along channels carved by previous flows of unskilled labor, the two must be treated differently.

⁴⁶ Chaloff and Lemaître (2009) do allow for other skill definitions based on occupation.

⁴⁷ Use of the term highly skilled even within OECD publication is inconsistent. Yet based on the OECD (1994) Frascati Manual and the OECD (1995) Canberra Manual, most publications assume four ways to distinguish highly skilled: by qualification, activity, sector and occupation (Mahroum 2000: 24). Especially feminist scholars have criticized a definition of skills heavily reliant on technological terms, while reducing occupations often occupied by women such as nursing to semi-skilled work (see Guo and Iredale 2003: 81; Hardill and MacDonald 2000: 682; Kofman and Raghuram 2005: 150; Purkayastha 2005: 182). Adrian Favell, Miriam Feldblum and Michael Peter Smith (2006: 2) point out that nurses should be included in the “skilled and educated category” and that some highly skilled migrants are counted as unskilled in migration statistics due to mismatches on the labor markets, deskilling or visa status as a refugee or trailing migrant (see also Iredale 2005: 156; Kofmann and Raghuram 2005: 151; Purkayastha 2005: 182).

⁴⁸ Governments may also seek to shield or protect national labor markets from immigration: a case in point in the migration of medical professionals, for whom it is often difficult to obtain a license to practice their occupation in a different country. See Gabriele Vogt (2011: 211–212) on government-designed policies to attract caregivers to Japan (Economic Partnership Agreements), under which migrants are only allowed to work as assistant nurses or assistant care givers until they pass the relevant examinations, not allowing tasks which the professionals used to perform in their countries of origin.

Governments use human capital measured by educational degrees and working experience as criteria for selecting who is allowed to enter implicitly buying into the belief that human capital is transferable and beneficial to the home economy.⁴⁹

Similarly, much literature on the migration of highly skilled is “dominated by the human capital paradigm” (Meyer 2001: 94) and tends to overemphasize economic motivations and dual labor markets in developing and developed nations. As has been pointed out in previous sections, this ignores factors of discrimination, household dynamics and gender differences (see also Favell, Feldblum and Smith 2006: 18; Iredale 2001: 19; 1999). Human capital is not necessarily transferable (Faist 1997: 188; Favell, Feldblum and Smith 2006: 17) and, as Jean-Baptiste Meyer (2001) argues, dependent on “supportive networks (institutional, infrastructural, technical, educational, social, financial, etc.) [...], for and by which [...] skills have been created or channeled, and therefore have value in the relevant socio-economic context.”⁵⁰

Explanations of highly skilled migration need to include not only government policy and corporate labor markets, but also perceived job chances, labor market structure, taxation policy and working contents in different countries, earning differentials, development gaps, prestige and working environments, favorable legislation for business development/research, in addition to non-pecuniary factors, networks and sociocultural affinity (Iredale 2003: 122; Mahroum 2000; Solimano 2008: 5; Straubhaar 2000: 20–21; Thorn and Holm-Nielsen 2008).⁵¹ Various scholars have pointed out that the factors may vary in importance for different occupations (Mahroum 2000; Solimano 2008). Most research in the field of highly skilled migration lacks a sound theoretical basis; for example, Thorn and Holm-Nielsen (2008: 164) call for more empirical research disentangling factors influencing highly skilled (return) migration.

Interestingly, family factors are almost non-existent in research on highly skilled migration (Kofman and Raghuram 2005: 151–153; Willis and Yeoh 2000). Studies on migrant personality have found that students (from the USA and Europe) prioritized work, achievement and power over family, while Tabor’s (2014: 124) study showed the importance of work–life balance and lifestyle preferences for migration decisions. One would expect that highly skilled, who are supposed to be able to work anywhere, should be unwilling to compromise in this

⁴⁹ In some occupations, it is not policy-makers but companies that select immigration of skilled labor, a channel Iredale (2001: 16) terms “industry led,” exemplified by corporations’ internal labor markets (see also Beaverstock 2012: 245; Iredale 2003: 123).

⁵⁰ This ties in to DaVanzo’s (1981: 116) conceptualization of location-specific capital, explored in detail in the next section.

⁵¹ Karine Tremblay (2002: 59–61) identifies the following factors as determining student mobility: expertise that can be gathered in foreign locations, foreign language proficiency as a goal and the institutionalization of student migration through exchange or scholarship programs.

realm.⁵² For this reason, it is crucial to look at immigration policy for spouses, corporate support for spousal employment and household organization, gender differences⁵³ and power structures in highly skilled migration.

The slowly emerging literature on lifestyle migration focuses on the search for a good life by affluent migrants (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014). While highly skilled are not at the center of these studies (rather retirement or leisure migration), the identified factors in this string of research may in part be also applicable to highly skilled migration. Factors include for example, preferences of a specific "pace of life", "community spirit" and "freedom from prior constraints" (Benson and O'Reilly 2009: 610). Other studies have also pointed out the necessity to analyze the impact of factors such as identity (Sussmann 2011) and emotional ties (Constant and Massey 2002b), presence of family and friends (DaVanzo 1976: 15), and patriotism (Zeithammer and Kellogg 2013: 645) in migration and settlement.

Publications on highly skilled migration often stress the aspect of time: as early as 1967, Grubel and Scott have differentiated between "once-and-for-all" and "reversible" migration of highly skilled. There is an entire literature on brain drain, brain gain and brain circulation that looks at the economic and social effects of out- and immigration of talent on receiving and sending countries.⁵⁴ Sending countries seek to profit from migrants that have acquired skills abroad and to this end design policies to attract them back (or, as in student migration, require students to sign contracts ensuring their return). Dumont and Spielvogel (2008: 177) find that highly educated migrants are generally more likely to return. The question of how much time migrants spend abroad, how they raise their human capital during this time and how they decide when and whether to return is at the center of this phenomenon. However, migration decision-making processes about return, further delay of return or settlement remain underresearched.

2.1.6 *Return Migration*

Previous migrations have been found to increase the likelihood that someone will move again (Morrison 1971). Yet how the subsequent migration decision-making processes differ from first-time migration remains undertheorized, and thereby the "understanding of it [return migration] remains hazy" (Cassarino 2004: 253; see

⁵² Andrés Solimano (2008: 6) and Sami Mahroum (2000: 28) mention family factors in passing, but emphasize career factors.

⁵³ Most research on highly skilled has focused on male-dominated occupations, yet skilled migration of women and men follows different rules, also because women are mostly employed in occupations in which migration is heavily regulated (Kofmann and Raghuram 2005: 149–150).

⁵⁴ As Iredale (2003: 121) points out, the literature on skilled migration has moved from focusing on the brain drain to seeing migration as "a search for greater opportunities and life chances and lifestyles by professional people from both developing and developed countries."

also Faist 1997: 188). Return migration challenges general, in particular economic perspectives of migration theory that is largely based on the “permanent settlement migration paradigm” (Hugo 2003); it is especially the return to less developed economies that puzzles (neoclassical) economists in migration theory (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008: 178; Dustmann 2003: 815; Dustmann and Görlach 2015: 2). This might be due to the underlying assumption that migration for a better life economically happens unidirectionally (to better developed countries). Existing instruments for explaining international mobility usually assume settlement migration and are therefore inadequate for modern mobility patterns.⁵⁵ As argued in the previous sections, it is not only economic factors that migrants consider when making migration decisions, but where they can best fulfill any number of goals. As Amelie Constant and Douglas S. Massey (2002a: 32) have found in a study on the return migration of German guest workers, it is not human capital characteristics and socio-economic achievements but social and economic attachments to Germany or their home country that decided about return or settlement.⁵⁶ Also, as pointed out by many scholars (Kley 2009: 53; Kley and Mulder 2010: 74), migration is a process, that is, the migration decision-making process may not be over after moving (Adams 2004; Tabor 2014: 127–128).

DaVanzo, one of the most prominent scholars of return migration,⁵⁷ has published on return and onward migration in cooperation with Peter A. Morrison (1982). They argue that most people move several times in their lives, in contrast to general migration theory’s treatment of movement as a final and once-in-a-lifetime event. Differences between initial and return moves include (most often) more knowledge about the destination as well as better strategies of information allocation in the latter case. DaVanzo and Morrison (1982: 2; DaVanzo 1980: 2; 1981: 117) assume an imperfectly informed individual that invests and seeks benefits by moving.⁵⁸ Another crucial element in DaVanzo and Morrison’s publications is location-specific capital.⁵⁹ This refers to factors from which an individual can only benefit in a particular place, including job-related factors such as a regular clientele, license to practice an occupation or company seniority, but also social factors such as friendship networks or community connections

⁵⁵ Christian Dustmann and Joseph-Simon Görlach (2015) compiled numbers of temporary migrations to OECD nations, showing that the outflows from OECD nations of foreign born agents ranged from 20 to 87 percent (OECD 2013).

⁵⁶ Social attachments include the presence of family, economic attachments the possibility to send remittances; yet Constant and Massey (2002a: 32) also point to political attachments, for example, German citizenship. Social ties between movers and stayers remain even after international migration, which “is why many movers return to the countries of origin,” as Thomas Faist (1977: 188) states.

⁵⁷ DaVanzo’s work focuses on micro-level, mainly economic, factors influencing migration.

⁵⁸ DaVanzo and Morrison (1982: 2) explicitly state that they do not assume a rational individual, as information is never completely correct and its allocation is dependent on interests, networks and channels (and therefore costly, DaVanzo 1980).

⁵⁹ DaVanzo and Morrison (1982) also include non-pecuniary factors as determinants of migration.

(DaVanzo 1981: 116; DaVanzo and Morrison 1982: 4). After a first move, location-specific capital needs to be built up in the new place; however, with more time spent there, location-specific capital in one's place of origin may decrease, thereby also diminishing the likelihood of return migration (DaVanzo 1981: 116).⁶⁰ While DaVanzo and Morrison do present one of the basic assumptions of this study, namely that agents weigh consequences of movement based on subjective perceptions, they completely leave out a model of decision making.

When an agent considers moving to a different location, John Kennan and James R. Walker (2013) point out that "home," or as DaVanzo (1981: 116) argues, to some degree any place at which a migrant has spent time before, are considered differently than other places, and are, most often, the preferred destination.⁶¹ DaVanzo (1976: 15) hypothesizes higher earnings opportunities to be of less importance to returnees than to first-time migrants, but that non-pecuniary factors (such as the presence of friends and family) are of higher importance. Return and onward moves may be reactions to changes in expected costs and benefits (or corrective moves due to the non-materialization of expected benefits), but also well-planned out strategies of further human capital investment (Cassarino 2004: 254; DaVanzo and Morrison 1982: 3). Therefore it is important to take the goal of the original movement into consideration when analyzing return migration decisions.⁶² DaVanzo and Morrison (1982: 51–53) find that the propensity to

⁶⁰ This study adopts the concept of location-specific capital over "place utility" (Wolpert 1965), because the former is more useful to explain return migration. Julian Wolpert introduced the idea of place utility in 1965. It denotes "the net composite of utilities which are derived from the individual's integration at some position in space" or "a positive or negative quantity, expressing respectively the individual's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with respect to that place." He distinguished between place utility that is expected at the current place and potential destinations, which "consists largely of anticipated utility and optimism which lacks the reinforcement of past rewards." This lack of personal experience of utility for a potential migrant has to be compensated by information (Wolpert 1965: 162). In the case of return migration, the migrant (thinks he) knows more about his destination from personal experience and needs to rely less on externally provided information (although the accuracy of his information may decrease with time).

⁶¹ While some of the (intended) movement analyzed in this study cannot be directly classified as "return" migration (see Peek (1981) on this distinction, cited in Arowolo (2000: 61)), because students have moved from rural areas to Japan to study and intend to "return" to China but to "move on" to larger cities such as Shanghai or Beijing. They need to move to "global cities" (Sassen 1991) as it is only where specialist jobs concentrate that they can best cash in on their newly acquired human capital (Koser and Salt 1997: 290). For them, their location-specific capital is likely to be diminished in those new towns, although they possess language and general cultural skills. Language and cultural differences persist between rural and urban areas, but also between urban areas such as Beijing and Shanghai in China. In addition, migrants need to organize additional paper work when they move to a place at which they are not registered (see Section 5.3.1 on issues of *hukou*).

⁶² While students may have left their home town to focus on their studies, with the end of their studies they may return and enter the labor market (or an additional study program) as planned. Other positive examples are if a migrant earns as much money as planned to realize a goal in his home country. In other cases, workers may fail to get a job they desired or to earn enough money and return earlier than planned. Distinguishing between failed immigration and successful temporary migration reflects the

return declines the more time a migrant spends away as location-specific capital at his home decreases, while they interpret returns after a short period of living away from home as corrective moves, made often by the least educated in their sample. This study fills the gap in the literature about how a group of highly skilled decides about return or settlement. It zooms in on events that all of these highly skilled have experienced, such as university graduation or ends of company training and analyzing the importance of various factors in the decision-making process. In the following paragraphs, theoretical explanations of return migration are presented.

Francesco Cerase (1974) in his study of Italian returnees from the United States points to other than only economic factors that are considered in neoclassical economics and the New Economics of Labor Migration: return might be motivated by the failure to integrate (return of failure),⁶³ by the achievement of the goal in the host countries (return of conservatism or of innovation) or be triggered by retirement.⁶⁴ Over time, explanations came to include the preference for life in a migrant's home country (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008: 163) or family factors such as the impact of children on return (Dustmann 2003). Whether reintegration in one's home society is successful depends on the degree of detachment of a migrant during his time abroad, on the level of change in the home society and whether a migrant can readjust (or readapt), and on his skill development abroad, which can be used in the home economy (Cassarino 2004: 259; Dumon 1986; King 1986). Transnationalists, in contrast to this structural approach, point out that migrants often maintain links with their home societies

distinction between neoclassical economic migration theory and the New Economics of Labor Migration, respectively (Cassarino 2004: 255–256).

⁶³ A factor that may influence return migration is an individual's conception of identity and adaptation. Both the host society's attitude (as well as institutions such as migration policy) and individual-level characteristics of the migrants affect the success of adaptation (Furnham and Bochner 1982; Sussmann 2011: 51). An individual can have many identities, based on family, ethnicity, nationality, gender, occupation or even hobbies, to name but a few. In the context of migration, identities may shift or aspects may gain in importance. Transnational identities may develop through identification with the society of origin and host society (Cassarino 2004: 273). Feelings of belonging to a certain culture may only sharply come out when one encounters behaviors of members of an "out-group" that reinforce a sense of difference. Models of integration (most famously by Esser (1980) or Berry (1995)) take this into consideration to varying degrees; yet for this study, it is argued, only migrants' perceived integration matters. The issue of reintegration into one's home society upon return, although not studied in detail in this study, is of importance when migrants consider a return to their home countries. Society, economy and even the environment may have changed during their absence, and return migrants need to get re-accustomed (Arowolo 2000: 62).

⁶⁴ The structural approach also looks at the role returnees play in their home countries (Cassarino 2004: 257–261). In fact, much research on return migration is more concerned with the impact of returning labor migrants (Iredale, Guo and Rozario 2003: 5). See, for example Cerase (1974) on the role of returnees as agents of change or conservatism. If a migrant detaches himself from his home country during his stay in the host country and adopts, for example, spending patterns, he may want to act as an agent of innovation after return. If he saves up money for his return, he aspires to reintegrate at a higher level of the social hierarchy without attempting to change his home society.

(Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994: 3–7), thereby avoiding detachment and facilitating reintegration (Cassarino 2004: 262). This process is aided by governmental efforts of home countries seeking to benefit from their overseas population economically (or even politically, Cassarino 2004: 263). Governments may aid with reintegration (Arowolo 2000: 67). Migrants can profit from their ties by building transnational businesses. Social network theory, similar to transnationalism, stresses the goals and structures of various networks. Return migrants may benefit from the social capital they acquired in the host country or maintained in their home countries.

Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2004) compared five theoretical approaches to return migration, summarized in the following table:

Table 2.1: Theories of Return Migration

	neo-classical economics	new economics of labor migration	structuralism	trans-nationalism	cross-border social network theory
return migration	stayers are successful, returnees have failed.	return is part of the plan (“calculated strategy”), after achieving objective in destination country.	“core/periphery dichotomy,” return happens without “changing or compensating for structural constraints” in country of origin.	return must not be final locational decision but strategy, after goals of migration are met and enough resources available to make living at home.	migrants keep up social and economic networks across borders that provide information.
the returnee	“unsuccessful migrant who could not maximize the experience abroad.”	successful migrant who reached goals in destination country.	brings savings back home, “behavioural divergence” upon return.	Part of a “globally dispersed <i>ethnic group</i> ” [italics in original], goal is cross-border mobility.	“a social actor who has values, projects, and own perception of return environment”, well-planned return, returnee well-integrated.
the returnee’s motivation	failure of migration, need for return.	“attachment to home and household,” aims of migration fulfilled.	“attachment to home and household, nostalgia,” adjustment to “realities of home market and power relations.”	“attachment to home and household,” crucial family ties, favorable perception of conditions in home country.	motivation is “shaped by social, economic and institutional opportunities at home as well as by relevance of own resources.”
financial capital (fc)	migrant brings home no income or savings.	remittances as insurance, assistance for household.	remittances or savings do not impact development, fc remains in household.	remittances incl. pensions/ social benefits, fc impacts economy/politics at home.	fc just one type among many resources. Used to invest in projects to secure return.
human capital (hc)	hc not transferable to home labor market.	“acquisition of skills varies with probability of return.”	hc not transferable to home labor market (structural constraints), no social status change.	upward mobility by means of newly acquired skills.	skills, knowledge and connections can be used to secure return.

Source: Cassarino (2004: 269), altered version compiled by the author.

Cassarino's (2004) table shows well how different theoretical approaches evaluate return migration as the result of a successful or unsuccessful stay abroad. This further stresses the necessity to take original migration motivation into consideration when explaining return movement.⁶⁵ The theories all use different underlying assumptions about the original motivation: a settlement paradigm, a clearly defined temporary goal, or return as part of the plan which leads to the formation of sustainable transnational networks and the objective of forming transferable human capital. However, Castles and Miller (2009: 20) point out that "the experience of migration and of living in another country often leads to modification of the original plans, so that migrants' intentions at the time of departure are poor predictors of actual behavior." This, it is argued, holds not only true for the intended time frame of migration⁶⁶ but also for how migrants behave to sustain or increase (transnational) social or human capital. It is therefore necessary to analyze migrants' return migration decision processes to understand behavior and migration outcomes.⁶⁷

2.2 Decision-Making Theory

There is much dispute about what constitutes a decision: whether the decision is a process or an event, about the level of rationality of the person(s) involved, and how a decision maker processes a problem to arrive at a solution, to name but a few points. Other disputed aspects concern the timing and causality of an action stemming from a decision, as a person may not act according to a made decision. This chapter provides a short overview over decision-making theory while zooming in on approaches applicable to return migration decision making.

Research on decision making can be divided into three approaches: normative, prescriptive and descriptive. Normative approaches produce models of how "idealized" persons "should think and should act," while prescriptive models attempt to improve decision-making processes of real persons. Descriptive approaches on the other hand deal with decision makers' perceptions, constraints, and processes of deliberation depending on their characteristics (Bell, Raiffa and

⁶⁵ Research by Elizabeth Thomas-Hope (1999) shows that in the case of skilled migrants, return is often part of the plan when emigrating, as migrants seek to profit from their experience abroad economically and in terms of social mobility (Iredale, Guo and Rozario 2003: 7).

⁶⁶ Most migration decision-making models rely on the concept of migration "intention" (Kley 2011; 2009), yet life events change the circumstances and priorities of migrants, thereby leading to the postponement or cancellation of migration intentions (de Groot *et al.* 2011). Since Rossi's 1955 study, research has focused on the discrepancy between the intention to move and actual behavior, showing that some people who stated an intention never realize it (de Groot *et al.* 2011; Kan 1999: 95).

⁶⁷ Brigitte van Baalen and Tobias Müller (2008) have published a study on return intentions of temporary migrants in Germany, yet they reduce the tendency to postpone initial return migration plans to the inability to accumulate sufficient savings and wrong predictions of their future tastes.

Tversky 1995: 16–17). This section first reviews classical decision-making (CDM) theory, before focusing on naturalistic decision making and its applicability to return migration decisions. Conceptualizations of decision-making stages (by process decision theories) and the connection between decisions and subsequent actions are presented before moving on to the model of migration decision making adopted in this study.

2.2.1 *Classical Decision-Making Theory and Limits of Rationality*

The CDM approach is characterized by a) a choice between available alternatives, b) a focus on the consequences of a decision for a desired outcome, c) searching through information to analytically reach a decision, and d) the goal of abstract model formation (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 333). At its center stands the rational individual with perfect information and unwavering preferences (Zey 1992: 10). Most decision research has focused on the quality of the outcome of decision-making processes, that is, how close it comes to the “right” or ideal choice (Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 12).

One of the individual-level models that is based on an idealized decision maker is *subjective expected utility* (SEU, Simon *et al.* 1992: 33).⁶⁸ It differs from *expected utility* by including the idea that utility may differ for various individuals. Assumptions of the SEU model are that there are no uncertainties regarding the outcomes of actions and that in addition to complete information a decision maker also has a fixed set of preferences for consequences (Bell, Raiffa and Tversky 1995: 20–21; Hollnagel 2007: 6; Simon *et al.* 1992: 33). David E. Bell, Howard Raiffa and Amos Tversky (1995: 21) describe the SEU model as “a normative system that captures in a crisp and elegant fashion the formal properties” of ideal rational choice. Criticism of the SEU model covers the points that information is almost always incomplete and preferences do not only differ by individual but also for a single individual over time.⁶⁹ It also leaves out the framing of decisions or goal setting (Simon *et al.* 1992: 33).

The image of the “rational” individual in normative models was criticized by Simon (1955) as unrealistic as early as the 1950s. The “homo economicus” who acts in order to maximize his interests after carefully considering a comprehensive list of potential options based on complete information does not exist (Simon

⁶⁸ See De Jong and Fawcett (1981), Kalter (2008) etc. for migration-decision studies applying this model. Gardner (1981), Brown and Sanders (1981) and DaVanzo (1980) have pointed out imperfect information in real life as a weakness in those models.

⁶⁹ As Herbert A. Simon *et al.* (1992: 34) put it: “limits are imposed by the complexity of the world in which we live, the incompleteness and inadequacy of human knowledge, the inconsistencies of individual preference and belief, the conflicts of value among people and groups of people, and the inadequacy of the computations we can carry out.”

1955: 99, 114; Zey 1992: 10–11). Instead, Simon (1972: 168; 1978) developed the idea of “satisficing,”⁷⁰ based on a person of bounded rationality. Satisficing is adopted as a strategy in complex situations because of situational or organization constraints, rather than seeking for the optimal solution (optimizing). Other scholars have also tried to systematically limit rationality as the basis of their theories, partly after conducting laboratory experiments that test for rational solutions to hypothetical problems (often statistical or choices from a fixed set of alternatives). Those experiments have shown that humans show systematic biases that lead to less than rational choices and that they are easily influenced by how the problems are framed (Coleman 1990: 14; March 1994: 14–15; March and Shapira 1992: 276; Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 14; Tversky and Kahneman 1995). Factors that limit rationality include limited attention, memory, comprehension and communication (March 1994: 10). In his description of the theory of purposive action,⁷¹ Coleman (1990: 17–18) points out that even though actions may not be rational objectively, humans act to achieve certain goals and to them at the time of the action, they will perceive their choice as rational. What matters is therefore the “point of view of the actor” (Coleman 1990: 18). As argued in the previous section, return migration needs to be examined at a micro level to understand the perception of the individual.

2.2.2 *Naturalistic Decision Making (NDM) and Limits in Applicability*

CDM theory often deals with “small” decisions, choosing from “a fixed set of alternatives” (Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 5). Most theories aiming to explain decisions are normative prescriptive theories, originating from lab experiments and focusing on the event of decision making. The approach of *Naturalistic Decision Making* (NDM) has developed in opposition to normative, laboratory-tested models, in which an agent weighs expected consequences on his goals for each alternative, seeing whether the course of action fits his value system, and then makes a choice. NDM researchers, in contrast, focus on situation awareness, problem diagnosis and planning instead of a “moment of choice” (Beach *et al.*: 1997: 30; see also Klein 1997a: 290; 1997b: 387). Judith Orasanu and Terry Connolly (1993: 5) criticize CDM theory as having little to do with real-life decision-making circumstances and instead suggest refocusing the attention on naturalistic decision settings.

They point to eight factors that hinder this straight-forward process outside laboratory settings:

⁷⁰ Simon has used the Scottish word for “satisfying” to denote the act of setting an aspiration level and looking for and finally choosing an option that is satisfactory in terms of said level (Simon 1957b).

⁷¹ Drawing from Max Weber’s (1904) study of Protestantism and capitalism, Coleman (1990: 13–14) proposes this theory in which rational individuals seek to maximize utility by a particular behavior.

1. ill-structured problems,
2. uncertain dynamic environments,
3. shifting, ill-defined, or competing goals,
4. action/feedback loops,
5. time stress,
6. high stakes,
7. multiple players and
8. organizational goals and norms (Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 7).

Most of these factors apply to return migration decision making:

Ill-structured Problems

Migrants face multi-faceted problems. Depending on how they define the problem, return migration may or may not be a solution. Problem definition is dependent on situation assessment (explained in detail in Sections 2.3 and 5.1). In real world settings, agents need to reduce complexity of situations to identify a problem and make a decision based on problem definition (March 1994: 11; Simon *et al.* 1992: 34). Too little information hinders situation assessment; too much information makes it hard to focus on the important issues (March 1994: 11, 24; March and Shapira 1992: 276; Simon 1978: 13).⁷²

Uncertain Dynamic Environments

John D. Sterman and Linda Booth Sweeney (2005: 58) point out that many decision-making environments are “intrinsically dynamic,” that is by making a choice and acting accordingly one alters the state of the system.⁷³ In addition, decision-making environments may change on a number of levels: on a macro level, legislation or political systems or even stages of economic development may change, on a meso level, occupational and private networks may expand or weaken, but also one’s position in expanding and shrinking households or companies may be subject to change, for example.⁷⁴

Shifting, Ill-defined, or Competing Goals

With each step in the career- and family-related life course (see Section 2.1.4), priorities and responsibilities in the private and career realm shift, complicating

⁷² Diagnosis is used to narrow down which aspects are particularly unsatisfactory. Decisions are made in a complex context; the way in which a decision maker perceives his situation based on available information influences his decisions.

⁷³ This reflects the logic of cumulative causation that states that the movement of each migrant alters the dynamics and leads to a perpetuation of migration (Massey *et al.* 1993: 448–449)

⁷⁴ As Erik Hollnagel (2007: 5) points out, decision making is not a distinct event happening out of context: it may be the outcome of “continuous coping with complexity” of life, but it can, as will be shown in later sections, also be the reaction to a specific event. Factors leading to uncertainty could be environmental problems, feelings of political instability and security.

their integration. Critics of rational choice have pointed out that actors do not rank their goals hierarchically and estimate the consequences of a number of potential courses of action on each goal. Amitai Etzioni (1967: 390), however, has pointed to the fact that actors have one or a small number of *primary* goals and that they do consider the impact of action on the most important ones.

Action/Feedback Loops

An agent trying to solve a problem may not rely on only one strategy or on only one decision, but adopt a series of decisions trying to solve an ill-structured problem (Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 9). The decision to migrate needs most often to be seen as one strategy among many to alleviate problems—for some migrants, return migration is the first, for others the last option. In the meantime, other solutions, such as job switches or divorce, change the environment in a way that adaptations of strategies become necessary.

Time Stress

Naturalistic decision making deals with expert decision making under time stress; yet in migration decisions, the time stress is not as pressing. In some cases, time constraints become crucial, though: for example, when considering job opportunity structures for different life phases and career stages in the country of origin, to enter a booming market early on, or as reactions to crises.

High Stakes

Decisions that involve high stakes are most probably very stressful to the decision maker who is riddled with doubt, conflict or anxiety over a decision, scared to diminish his social status or self-esteem (Janis and Mann 1979: 15, 17). Migration decisions have tremendous consequences and call for a number of resulting decisions. Through a decision for migration, social and cultural environments change, jobs need to be switched etc. The stakes to return rise with heightened family responsibilities, increased or decreased social and economic integration. This point could also be connected to the study of risk. Whether an individual will opt for a risky choice depends on his estimation of the risk, his character (willingness to take risks), and structural factors that shape the environment in which risks could be taken (March 1994: 35–36, 40). This reflects the dichotomy of internal and external factors as well as the individual's perception; the latter is the focus in this study.

Multiple Players

Employers, spouses, parents and children and even friends among other persons are affected by decisions of an individual. An agent may make the decisions alone or include others in the decision-making process. In some cases, others may make the decision for a migrant.

Organizational Goals and Norms

This refers to organizational settings that affect decisions, in the sense that the organization's rules and goals set a framework within which an individual operates. This is the constraint observed least in migration decision making. However, this may be an issue when persons are sent abroad by their companies.

Since the first NDM publication in 1993 (Klein *et al.*), research has shifted from stressing complex environments to seeing the expertise of the decision maker as the defining element of NDM research (Zsombok 1997: 3–4), although NDM has also been applied to test differences in experts' and novices' decision making. This shift in focus leads to the situation that although the field settings are similar, the models that NDM researchers developed for expert⁷⁵ decision making are not necessarily applicable to return migration decisions. Yet, this section focuses on findings and research foci useful to explaining return migration decisions.

NDM focuses on the *process* of decision making. It assumes experienced experts matching solutions to a problem; models are context-specific (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 333).⁷⁶ Scholars research which information experts seek and how they interpret it to make a decision. *Matching* is the process of recognizing a situation and the appropriate solution. In this case, various options are evaluated one at a time until one that matches the situation is found; there is little or no comparison between the options and their outcome (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 334–335). However, the decisions of returning, settling or moving on are most often not the result of matching a *typical* solution to the encountered problems.⁷⁷ Although all the persons included in this study moved at least once, they do not qualify as experts in the sense that they have developed expertise through repetitive tasks and multiple feedback loops (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 335).⁷⁸ They combine behavior shown in expert and in novice decision making by combining a small number of alternative courses of action based on analytical situation assessment.

Difficulties an agent encounters in his decision-making process also include uncertainty. This has been defined as inadequate understanding of a situation due to limited situation awareness, lacking or unreliable information, or conflicting

⁷⁵ People become experts by experience; the idea is that they more easily identify the situation correctly and choose from alternatives they have learned. NDM has been applied to explain the behavior of fire fighters, chess players, soldiers etc. It is quite telling that the first conference that led to the first concerted effort to publish a volume under the new name of naturalistic decision making was sponsored by the Army Research Institute (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 332).

⁷⁶ As NDM research is still in its early stages, some aspects remain underresearched. This is true to decision making for different cultures (H.A. Klein 2005: 244), gender, etc. Also, NDM has started out as a countermovement to CDM theory and has yet to integrate some of the valid findings of earlier decision research into its own body of theory (Howell 1997: 45; Klein 1997b: 387).

⁷⁷ Skilled decision makers "perceive situations as typical cases where certain types of actions are typically appropriate, and are usually successful" (Lipshitz *et al.* (2001: 336) This conceptualization draws mainly from Klein's (1993) Recognition-Primed Decision model.

⁷⁸ This type of expertise is the focus of research of empirically based prescription.

alternatives (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 338). Ways to cope include reducing uncertainty, making assumptions to make up for a lack of knowledge, comparing pros and cons of alternative courses of action, preparation for negative consequences, and suppression of uncertainty by ignoring it (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 338, Lipshitz and Strauss 1997; March 1994: 38). Decision makers have also been found to mentally simulate the intended actions and think of (unintended) consequences (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 336⁷⁹). Based on this simulation, they decide whether to adopt the proposed course of action.

2.2.3 *Stages/Phases in the Decision-Making Process*

Explanations of return migration decisions must focus on the *process* of decision making; without an understanding of the process and the factors which influence it, theory must remain on a superficial level with insufficient explanatory power.

Raanan Lipshitz and Adi Adar Pras (2005: 102) divide the decision-making process into two phases, “one consisting of definition, situation description, and diagnosis (in relatively ill-defined problems), and the other consisting of action, option evaluation and elaboration.” Yet these phases need not only occur once and decision makers may switch back and forth several times. If the problem is complex, their evidence shows that individuals switch between the phases far more often than in the case of simple problems (Lipshitz and Pras 2005: 103).⁸⁰ In the first phase, the terms situation “awareness” or “assessment” are crucial to the understanding of decisions (Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 18; Zsombok 1997: 11).⁸¹ Based on the understanding of a situation, decision makers form mental models which lay the groundwork for subsequent considerations. Mental models by definition do not accurately mirror reality but are subjective; they represent an “internal reality” (Burns 2005: 17). The way problems are framed affects the solutions considered (Coleman 1990: 14; March and Shapira 1992: 276; March 1994: 14–15; Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 14; Simon *et al.* 1992: 33).⁸²

⁷⁹ Adriaan D. De Groot (1965: 266–274) has termed this “progressive deepening” to denote lengthy thought processes in chess, in which chess players go through phases of a) orientation (“looking at” consequences of general possibilities), b) exploration (deeply “calculating” moves, mind-mapping consequences), c) investigation (intensification of the previous step, more directed and exhaustive investigation) and d) a final phase of proof (constructing arguments for or against moves).

⁸⁰ In Kley’s (2011; 2009; Kley and Mulder 2010) “Rubicon” model of migration, toying with the idea of moving is largely limited to the consideration phase, while after one “crosses the Rubicon” and enters the planning phase, decisions become more binding. If one drops the intention to move in the planning stage, that decision comes at a social, emotional or financial cost.

⁸¹ In his review of real-world decision-making conceptualizations, Lipshitz (1993a: 128) summarizes most scholars agreeing on the idea that decision makers’ cognition guides their subsequent behaviors.

⁸² In traditional experiments of CDM this has referred to the wording of the problem description, as, for instance, in Kahneman and Tversky’s (1995) study on medical choices. Participants chose differently when asked about the probability of “dying” or “living.”

Hollnagel (2007: 6–7) conceptualizes decision making as a cycle triggered by an event followed by situation assessment, intention of action, choice of option and action, after which follows a feedback loop.⁸³ Yet how does one decide on an option based on one’s situation assessment and problem definition? As pointed out before, an agent does not reflect on every possible option and its effect on a fixed list of priorities. Usually, to reduce complexity under organizational constraints, decision makers test potential courses of action for compatibility with only a few primary goals (Etzioni 1967),⁸⁴ while optimizing means that the goal of the decision is the best-possible outcome for a number of requirements or objectives (Janis and Mann 1979: 29).⁸⁵ As will be shown in this case study, potential return migrants satisfice to some degree, yet the search for the “best” solution among a small number of choices is still carried out, reflecting the logic of SEU.⁸⁶ Return migration is always in the back of migrants’ heads when looking at options to solve a problem that is framed to be connected to living in a foreign country.⁸⁷ In a decision maker’s evaluation of which option is the best fit, Lee Roy Beach (1993: 157) points out that not only are decision makers trying to achieve certain goals, but they are also influenced by how they perceive the world in terms of norms and beliefs, by how they think things *ought* to be.⁸⁸ As Henry Montgomery, Lipshitz and Berndt Brehmer (2005: 5) have stated “[all] decisions [...] are made in a social context.”⁸⁹ Decisions have to be justified or made with immediate and extended family members and affect at least the immediate family (Tabor 2014: 129).

⁸³ However, Hollnagel (2007: 5) sees decision-making not as a process but as an activity.

⁸⁴ Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann (1979: 26) point out that satisficing implies that a person usually distinguishes between two options when looking to improve his situation: a new option that came to his mind and the one currently adopted. However, if neither is satisfactory, he will continue to look for one that is, leading to a consideration of a number of alternative courses of action. Yet, they stress that the decision maker does not compare all possible options for optimal fit (Janis and Mann 1979: 27). James G. March (1994: 27) points out that satisficing is a rule for the search of information rather than decisions. The search for additional information to help make a satisfactory decision depends on the evaluation of the expected outcome of a potential course of action. Inherent in this model are feedback loops between performance and search. Elements of consequential choice (cf. March 1994: 2) are reflected in this study, as decision makers weigh consequences of competing choices on goals.

⁸⁵ Janis and Mann (1979: 30) also theorize on how a decision maker tests whether an option meets the requirements by stating that there is a *minimal cutoff point* for each alternative and each is treated the same way. In contrast, in an optimizing strategy, the impact of a course of action on several, hierarchically ranked requirements is examined.

⁸⁶ March (1994: 18–19) has pointed out this weakness of the satisficing approach: as one of its basic assumptions is that courses of action are considered sequentially, a course that will lead to satisfactory outcomes for a number of goals would be chosen over another one that leads to satisfactory but better outcomes, simply because it was considered first. As will be shown, this is not adopted as strictly in return migration decisions. One reason could be that goals are ranked hierarchically and therefore, a number of alternatives is considered to lead to satisfactory outcomes among the goal spectrum.

⁸⁷ In this sense, it can be said that they may “match” the solution of spatial relocation to a situation they have encountered before.

⁸⁸ One example of this are gender norms in parent–child or marital relationships.

⁸⁹ This has only received attention in that team decisions have been examined through an NDM lens.

2.2.4 *Decision Making and Problem Solving in Migration*

In the literature review sketched out above, it becomes clear that decision making as conceptualized by NDM scholars and problem solving are closely related. In their study on recognition-primed decisions, which actually deals with problem-solving processes, Lipshitz and Pras (2005: 103) conclude that “the problem-solving process observed in this laboratory study is essentially identical with the decision-making processes observed by Klein and others [...] in naturalistic settings.” For analytical clarity, decision making and problem solving are differentiated in this subsection. Oswald Huber (1986: 109) likens parts of specific types of decision-making processes to problem solving. A problem is defined as “an (undesired) initial situation (initial state), a desired goal situation (goal state), that the problem-solver does not know in advance how to transform the initial state into the goal state” (Huber 1986: 110). Problem solving examines the stages agents adopt in solving a problem, while decision making addresses the process of identifying alternatives and choosing among them (Hollnagel 2007: 3). Yet, in their analysis of decisions NDM scholars integrate process models formerly reserved to problem-solving approaches, including situation analysis and identification of the problem, only to then turn to the more narrow definition of decision making, analyzing how agents use expertise to make a decision about how to react to the identified problem. This holistic approach to decision making is also adopted in this study. It ties in to models adopted in migration decision making (Kalter 1997; Kley 2011; 2009; Kley and Mulder 2010) that differentiate between considering and planning migration, two stages that are divided by the decision to move. The four-staged migration decision-making model presented in this study goes a step further back and analyzes which situations or events trigger a stage in which agents would consider relocation. The first stage in the model, therefore, draws from problem-solving literature, redefining the phases within this stage, and then analyzes the stage of option evaluation, which can be more closely defined as decision making. Once an agent has made the decision to move, he enters a planning stage, in which he makes resulting decisions to prepare the final action of relocation. In this study, the term locational decision-making refers to the entire process, from situation analysis to action, while acknowledging that lesser decisions form part of this process.

2.2.5 *Decision Making and Taking Action*

A problem connected to decision-making theory is the distinction between decision making as a distinct process and the following action. Agents may have decided on a course of action, yet encounter constraints, face additional difficulties, receive further information that lead them to either abandon their

decision or to alter it. Return migration is a perfect example for this: although an agent may intend to return to his country of birth in the future, many factors can get in the way of this intention.⁹⁰

Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen (1975), who published one of the first volumes on predictions of social behavior, suggest that looking at intentions of humans will most often be enough to predict subsequent action (if there are no unforeseen developments). Instead of subscribing to perfect rationality or to behavior as a result of “overpowering desires” they propose a “theory of reasoned action” (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 5; Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 24). The intention to perform a behavior is determined by a person’s attitude towards the behavior (positive or negative evaluation of the behavior) and subjective norms (perception of social pressures towards the behavior).⁹¹ In a later study, Ajzen (1988: 132) added a third factor to the framework he then called a “theory of planned behavior,” namely the factor of perceived behavioral control.⁹² Beliefs are often biased and rarely rational; yet from an ill-informed basis, a person will make reasoned choices to serve his interests (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 24). It is important to distinguish between attitudes and norms about behavior and attitudes about things or circumstances. For example, a negative stance towards political parties in general is different from a negative attitude towards the behavior of voting. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980: 8–9) treat this type of attitude as an external variable that may influence the attitude towards a behavior, but that is conceptually different. Whether behavior follows intention depends on the stability of the intention over time; the longer the time interval between forming of an intention and its intended action, the less accurate behavior can be predicted from intention (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 42, 47). The process of arriving at an intention differs with the time available and the novelty of the situation or gravity of the decision; while routine decisions of little importance can be made spontaneously based on previous experiences and a set of long-held beliefs, novel situations require more thorough processes (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 24).

In order to sufficiently explain behavior, not only must a researcher look at intentions but also subjective norms and attitudes that together form intentions, and, a further step back, factors that influence subjective norms and attitudes. In this line of thinking, they also refer to the information individuals possess about their environments and their beliefs about themselves, as these shape their

⁹⁰ Hollnagel (2007) stresses the importance of time as the information that forms the basis of deliberation and the stability of the situation ages and a “window of opportunity” may close if one waits too long to act on a decision/information. In order to cope with time stress, he suggests satisficing strategies, which, however, may lead to regret, as, retrospectively, a different choice might have yielded better results.

⁹¹ March (1994: 2) also distinguishes between the “objectively” expected outcomes of actions and the subjective feelings about them.

⁹² In Fishbein and Ajzen’s latest (2010) publication, all three factors are included in the “reasoned action approach.”

perceptions and, ultimately, situation assessment and identification of potential solutions (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 62, 79). Based on incomplete (or even false) information, persons form behavioral and normative beliefs, which in turn influence attitudes towards behavior and, as a last step, intention to perform/not perform a given behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 244). Factors that influence beliefs may include “age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, nationality, religious affiliation, personality, mood, emotion, general attitudes and values, intelligence, group membership, past experiences, exposure to information, social support and coping skills,” yet there is not necessarily a causal connection to behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 24–25).⁹³

Positive individual evaluation of a behavior may conflict with social pressure not to perform it; an agent needs to reasonably weigh pros and cons, and strengths in one domain may outweigh weaknesses in the other (Ajzen 1988: 144; Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 22). Yet, the ensuing intention about performing the behavior will most probably explain subsequent (in)action. Ajzen’s (1988: 132) additional factor of *perceived* behavioral control refers to anticipated obstacles and the level of difficulty in performing a behavior. Perceived behavioral control influences motivation, as the perception of strong obstacles working against a behavior that is positively connoted hinders the forming of an intention to act on this positive evaluation (Ajzen 1988: 134, 143). Perceived behavioral control can also serve as a proxy for actual constraints, such as lacking skills or external constraints, which are harder to measure (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 21).

After an action is carried out, an agent enters a feedback loop. In NDM research, the term “error” that is prevalent in other conceptions of decision-making research does not exist. Instead, unsatisfactory results can be the product of “ineffective attention management and inadequate problem detection” (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 339). Whether a decision is right or wrong is mostly impossible to detect as there is no way to test for potential alternative outcomes. Yet regret or satisfaction may point toward the individual’s evaluation of past decisions (Janis and Mann 1979: 10–11). By satisficing, by compromising on the degree of “thoroughness” in search of information or options for action in situations of internal or external pressure, decision makers risk “failure” or regret (Hollnagel 2007: 8–9). Hollnagel (2007: 9) proposes different types of decision failures that may apply to migration decisions: wrong timing, duration, speed or direction of action.⁹⁴ In the context of migration, a person may say that he has moved at the wrong point in time, waited too long to make a decision to move (or settle), moved too fast without preparing correctly or moved to the wrong place, respectively.

⁹³ Fishbein and Ajzen (1975: 11–12) refer to the “age-old trilogy of affect, cognition and conation” when they use the terms attitude (feelings/evaluation), beliefs and behavioral intention, respectively.

⁹⁴ Other decision failures are distance, pressure, object and sequence of actions (Hollnagel 2007: 9).

2.3 Model of Return Migration Decision Making

One of the basic questions of migration research is why some agents move and others do not (Fischer, Martin and Straubhaar 1997: 53). Once the “permanent settlement migration paradigm” (Hugo 2003) was softened, this question was further subdivided into who settles in the host country, who moves on and who returns. Migration experience has been found to increase the likelihood of migration and highly skilled are considered especially mobile, moving in the direction of economic opportunity. The phenomenon of return migration of highly skilled puts migration theory to the test, as it often happens in opposite direction to economic opportunity (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008: 178). This section introduces a return migration decision-making model for highly skilled Chinese in Japan. First, the level of analysis is presented, and then the process of decision making as well as factors influencing the decision are traced, closing with a brief outline of the study and its contribution.

2.3.1 *Level of Analysis*

Decision-making theory has almost exclusively focused on individual-level decisions (exceptions include Duffy 1993; Orasanu and Salas 1993), while research on migration decisions has distinguished between household and individual decisions (De Jong and Fawcett 1981; Harbison 1981; Stark 1984).

In this study the author hypothesizes that return migration is only one option to solve problems or achieve goals of individuals and households. An individual perspective is adopted while including the possibility for joint decision making and decisions made for the individual by persons of power (such as parents, spouse and employers), who thus take the locational choice from the individual. The individual acts within a larger framework of macro-, meso-, exo- and micro-level factors (Bronfenbrenner 1989; Voydanoff 2008). Macro-level factors include stages of economic development, political structures, immigration regimes and “broad belief systems”. The macro level influences all other levels by providing “life-course options, patterns of social interaction, shared belief systems, and life styles,” including norms and ideologies (Voydanoff 2008: 38). Meso-level factors refer to social networks, exo-level factors to indirect influences of external environments through immediate network contacts (such as the spouse’s work settings, Achenbach 2014; Voydanoff 2008: 38). Micro-level factors refer to the roles and activities of an agent in family or friendship circles and at the workplace.

Therefore, in looking at the individual agent and his locational decisions, demographic factors such as age, gender, family-related and career-related life phase, position in the household and occupation need to be included (see also

Beshers 1967). Fishbein and Ajzen (2010: 24–25) also add personality,⁹⁵ general attitudes and values,⁹⁶ exposure to information and social support as factors on a micro level to explain behavior. A lack or inaccuracy of information is a crucial factor to explain less than rational decisions (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 244; DaVanzo 1980; DaVanzo and Morrison 1982). In addition, the perception of behavioral control, that is, the perception of social, political, cultural or economic obstacles (real or imagined) influences the evaluation of options and the likelihood to act on a decision (Ajzen 1988: 132–144; Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 21–22). An individual’s general attitudes, values and norms, are influenced by the macro level. Norms and ideology differ by culture: examples that are of importance in this study are gender role ideology or the norm of filial piety.⁹⁷ How these norms are interpreted and integrated into behavior depends on individual circumstances and their importance may shift during the life course.

The changes that come with career- and family-related life phase transitions, such as the ends of education or training, job switches and promotions, as well as marriage, childbirth, and ageing (frail) parents influence a number of factors. Among these are: responsibilities, priorities and goals of the decision maker, the number and influence of persons involved in the decision-making process, negotiation leverage and perception of behavioral control. Initial migration decisions are often made without including other agents in the process, but with rising responsibilities for spouse, children and elderly parents, the influence of these agents rises. The presence of children changes priorities, available income and power structures within households. The top priority “career” of the initial migration decision may be substituted by, e.g., “well-being of the child.”⁹⁸

The study examines priorities in locational decisions of highly skilled agents in different educational/occupational career- as well as family-related life phases, before integrating the two with the concept of parallel careers in Section 6.2. Educational/occupational career-related life phases comprise students/young workers starting out in their careers on the one hand (including B.A., M.A. and PhD students as well as those who had just only started out in their active careers), and participants established in their working lives on the other (division heads, middle and top management, academics as well as entrepreneurs). Family-related life phases range from the phase of early adulthood (single migrants or participants in non-committal relationships until age 35, who do not wish to start a family), family phase (defined as agents looking to settle down, including married migrants trying to start a family or with school-age children) and the establishing phase (in

⁹⁵ See Tabor (2014: 90–119) on the role of personality as a factor in migration decisions.

⁹⁶ Tversky and Kahneman (1986: S257) refer to the decision makers’ “norms, habits, and expectancies” that shape the framing and editing (in addition to evaluation) in prospect theory.

⁹⁷ Although cultural norms are not static, some are reinforced by legislation and thereby, slower to change (for example, taxation policy that encourages women to stay home).

⁹⁸ See Etzioni (1967) on primary goals.

a serious relationship/married without the desire to have children or married with children that have finished high school). This does not reflect conventional life course approaches, which differentiate not by the wishes of agents (the plan to start a family) but by their actual circumstances. Nevertheless, the study differentiates between these groups based on their intentions, as these intentions directly influence mobility behavior: some agents see their time in Japan as a moratorium on their private lives and exclude starting a family in Japan. The desire to start a family, therefore, has a real impact on migration decisions, justifying the grouping of participants by an expanded life course perspective. A detailed explanation of the rationale for this approach as well as results can be found in Section 6.2.

Previous studies have found gender differences both in the experiences of migrants, but also in the decision-making process underlying mobility behavior (Bielby and Bielby 1992: 1245; Cooke 2008; Ellis, Conway and Bailey 1996: 125; Purkayastha 2005: 182; Willis and Yeoh 2000: 258). Section 6.3 analyzes how career-oriented men and women differ in the factors they consider in locational decisions. In addition, the study examines how agents of different occupations vary in their perception of influential and decisive factors. As Beshers has pointed out as early as 1967, the occupation of the migrant influences his experiences in the host country, but also his decisions about settlement, onward movement or return migration. Development stages, legislation shaping working environments and immigration regimes, but also norms about job switches, upward mobility of women and foreigners, as well as income levels differ for various occupations in host and home countries. The classification of workers in this study is as follows: managers and executives, middle management, engineers and technicians, academics and scientists, entrepreneurs and students, drawing from Mahroum's (2000) conceptualization. In addition, occupational fields are distinguished: finance and consulting, engineering, sales and trade, education and research, IT, and law.

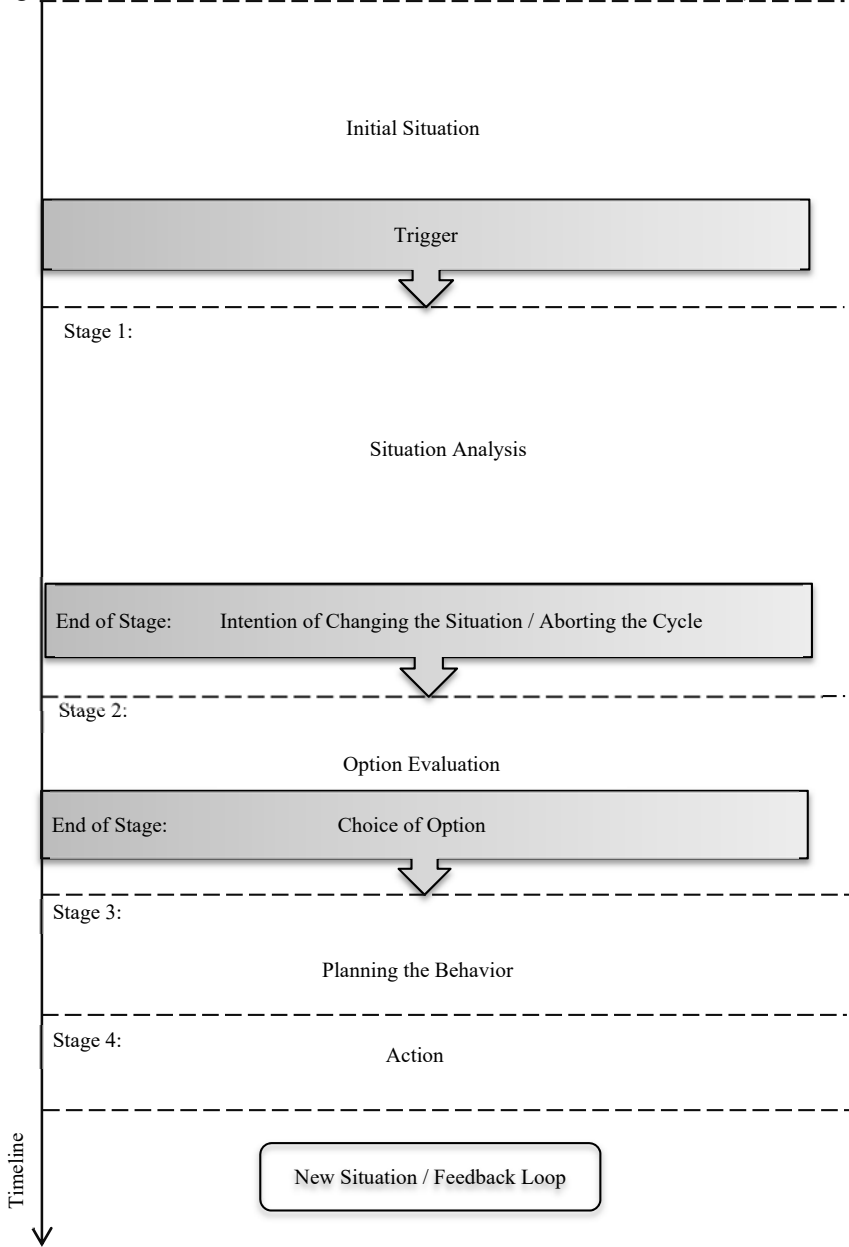
This study looks at the agency of migrants facing structural constraints on various levels and how they integrate those obstacles and facilitating factors into their decision-making processes.

2.3.2 *Process*

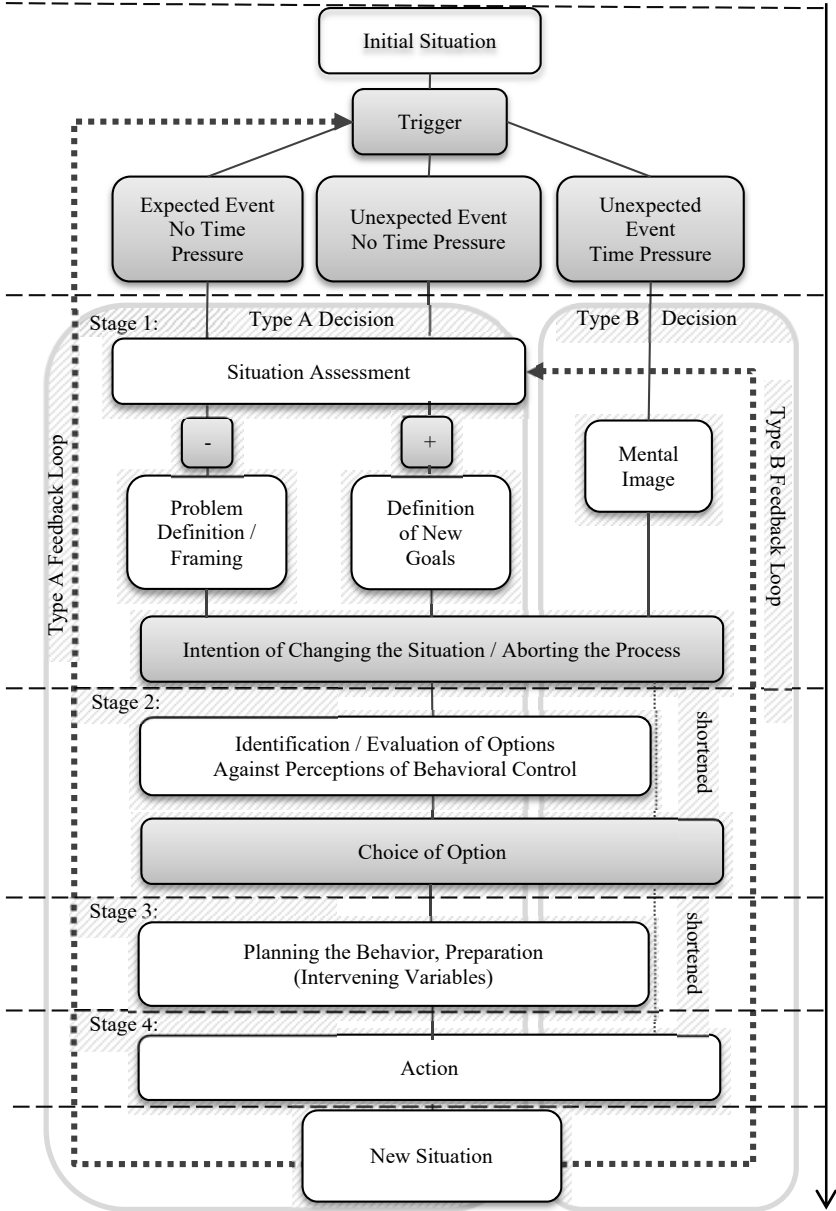
The decision-making model presented in the following two pages is based on findings from empirical data analysis of this study, Hollnagel's general decision-making (2007: 7) and Kley's (2009: 54) migration model.⁹⁹ The explanation of stages and phases follows after Figure 2.1, explored in detail in Chapter 5.

⁹⁹ Hollnagel's (2007: 7) decision-making cycle consists of an event, situation assessment, intention to act, choosing what to do, carrying out the action and feedback loops. Kley (2009) conceptualizes migration considerations, decision, migration plans, and carrying out the decision, i.e., moving.

Figure 2.1: A Model of Locational Decision-Making Processes (part 1)



A Model of Locational Decision-Making Processes (part 2)



compiled by the author.

Initial Situation and Triggers to the Decision-Making Process

Participants of the study are considered to be in a feedback loop of their (original decision to) move to Japan. By putting the initial migration decision into action, agents find themselves in a changed situation, in the case of migration, in a different country. This migration behavior (including physical relocation, but also actions in the host country, visa renewal etc.) usually is intended to last several years before agents return. Triggers to reevaluate the locational decisions are manifold, and the outcome need not always be migration. Events that induce migrants to reconsider their locational decisions are the end of a set time frame for living abroad, external, family- or career-related events. Family- and career-related events include the ends of educational programs, job switches but also “starting a job, marriage or starting to live with a partner, childbirth, having experienced the out-migration of family members or close friends, [...] having a partner who has the wish or necessity to move” (Kley and Mulder 2010: 79), or illness and sudden care needs of a parent.¹⁰⁰ In most cases in the sample, the decision-making process about return migration is triggered by the end of a set time frame or an expected event such as child birth, for example. Some of these events do not only act as triggers to the decision-making process, but they (e.g., childbirth) change a migrant’s negotiation power and position in the household. In addition, they fundamentally transform the hierarchy of goals, thus changing the factors that are considered in migration decisions. Other events found to trigger the process for participants include career-related events, such as job offers or retirement, but also unexpected events such as the earthquake, tsunami and following nuclear crisis of March 11, 2011. The following stage of situation analysis in the decision-making process differs by the agent’s perception of time pressure: in the absence of time pressure, he enters a Type A decision-making process, or if he perceives time pressure, begins a Type B decision-making process (see Figure 2.1). The two types differ in the stage of situation analysis, but also by length or thoroughness of the overall process, and especially the feedback loop after the decision is put into action, as is explained in the following.

¹⁰⁰ One important case that triggers a decision-making process and exemplifies the influence of situation assessment is the birth of a child. It changes housing needs, creates needs for child care and for a decision of whether the child should enter the host or the home country’s school system, which is often considered crucial for the child’s future. Migrants assess the situation of housing markets, childcare support and school systems both for the country of origin and the host country. Most migration happens during one’s 20s, but mobility rates increase again in later life due to health reasons or the wish to be close to family (Hayward 2004: 85; Geist and McManus 2008: 284).

Situation Analysis

Usually triggered by an event (in rare cases by general dissatisfaction, see Kalter 1997: 73–76; Speare 1974) with one’s current situation) the decision-making process begins with a stage of situation analysis. As Hollnagel (2007) points out, time is of crucial importance, because information ages, an agent makes decisions in “uncertain dynamic environments” (Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 7),¹⁰¹ goals and priorities shift or simply because there is time pressure to act to solve an acute problem.¹⁰² The agent analyzes how the event affects his life; if it disrupts his usual routine, he will look for a way to either “restore” it or build a new one.¹⁰³

Type A Decision: Situation Assessment

In the absence of time pressure, the stage of situation analysis consists of the phases of situation assessment followed by either problem definition/framing or setting new goals. The agent assesses his current situation, particularly whether he has achieved his goals and is satisfied in the three spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences. This assessment can vary in its level of thoroughness; if the trigger is a career-related event, he does not necessarily examine his satisfaction in the family sphere, but may only focus on his career goals. At the end of a set time frame, however, agents usually do assess their levels of satisfaction in all three spheres. Depending on the outcome, that is, whether agents have reached their initial goal of migration, or whether they are satisfied in various life spheres, agents either define underlying problems or set new goals.

Type A Decision: Problem Definition and Framing

If the agent is dissatisfied with one or more areas of his life, he will move on to analyze and identify one or more underlying problems.¹⁰⁴ The problem often lies in the same sphere on which situation assessment focused, but problems are

¹⁰¹ Examples are Japan’s economy in crisis or changes in migration policies.

¹⁰² Similar to a strategy described by Etzioni (1968: 294, see also Janis and Mann 1979: 36), in times of crisis decisions can be made fast and they can be costly, while in times of stability, decisions are made incrementally and are closely watched by one’s social system.

¹⁰³ One example is unexpected job loss; an agent will look for a new job (in the same field, same location) to “restore” his routine, but he may also build new routines by, e.g., starting his own business.

¹⁰⁴ Simplifying strategies to break down complex problems include editing, decomposing, heuristics and framing (March 1994: 12–15). Editing is the conscious reduction in the search for and analysis of information; in the decomposition process, problems are broken down to subjectively important parts, possibly dealt with individually to solve the larger issue (March 1994: 12). Heuristics refer to the situation recognition and identification of appropriate problem-solving behavior (March 1994: 13), reflecting the idea of matching. Framing means that decision makers frame the decisions “by beliefs that define the problem to be addressed” (March 1994: 14). They need not only rely on their own way of framing a problem but may be influenced by friends, family or colleagues.

usually ill-structured and manifold, affecting various areas of life.¹⁰⁵ Part of this process of problem identification is also the framing of the problem: the same problem can be seen as the result of various circumstances, influencing the next stage of option evaluation. For example, if a migrant is unhappy with and seeks to improve work–family balance,¹⁰⁶ he could define long working hours, insufficient support from employers or insufficient child care provisions and a lack of support from the spouse in the household as problems, to name but a few. Whether an agent sees the problem as connected to living in the country of destination, as a work or a private problem influences the solutions he considers.

Type A Decision: Definition of New Goals

An agent enters this phase if his situation assessment is positive. This is the case, for example, if the trigger to the decision-making process is the end of a set time frame and the migrant has reached one or more of his goals. He probably will set new goals in the sphere in which he has reached his initial goals, yet, he may also opt to keep the status quo and focus on other areas of life. The following stage of option evaluation depends on the specificity of goals and problems.

Type B Decision: Mental Image of Current State

The stage of situation analysis differs, if the agent perceives time pressure to react to an unexpected event. In that case, he forms a mental model of the evolving situation to “describe, explain, and predict an evolving situation” (Burns 2005: 17). His model is probably flawed, as the agent is never able to grasp the entirety of macro-, meso- and exo-level factors that together shape his current situation. In the context of locational decision-making processes, the agent does not assess his levels of satisfaction and goal achievement, but reacts to an unanticipated, external problem. In this case, the decision-making process culminating in physical relocation is sped up; the agent considers only a small number of options to ease the effect of the external event on his situation, carries out only the most urgent preparations, and relocates. Once he finds himself in a new situation, in a new location, he will re-enter the decision-making process at the phase of situation assessment, analyzing whether this was the right decision based on his general

¹⁰⁵ One example of this is if unhappiness with an agent’s working situation spills over into his private life, while changes in family life (such as child birth) may affect his goals and demands for his working environment (work–family negative spill-over, see Shimada *et al.* 2010: 335–336; Suzuki 2007: 14).

¹⁰⁶ Sociologist Patricia Voydanoff (2008: 48) defines work–family balance as the “global assessment that the work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains.” Time constraints but also strains in one area (work or family) may spill over into the other domain, leading to work–family negative spillover or role overload (Shimada *et al.* 2010: 335–336; Suzuki 2007: 14).

levels of satisfaction with his place of residence before sudden relocation. In the sample, Type B decisions were observed after 3/11. Agents would swiftly relocate, yet while for some this constituted the end of their migration experience in Japan, others returned to Japan after a few weeks.

Intention of Changing the Situation/Aborting the Process

Depending on the agent's perception of the gravity of the situation, he makes a first smaller decision, namely whether he intends to act to solve the identified problem or reach new goals. Some problems may be too small to act on or too big to be influenced by an action of the agent. In other cases, he will continue his behavior to keep the status quo. In those cases, the agent will not even go through a process of option evaluation but accept his situation.

Considering/Evaluating Options

In contrast to CDM theory, an agent does not rationally consider every possible option (due to lack of resources such as information, time and attention span). As a migrant has chosen moving before to reach goals, this option already forms part of his problem-solving repertoire and is likely to be considered. Following the logic of SEU models, an agent does consider the impact of a few options on his primary goals, which shift over time (March 1994: 31; Simon *et al.* 1992: 48).¹⁰⁷ However, an agent may make false estimations of consequences of choice (March and Shapira 1992: 276). Which options are considered more in depth than others depends not only on primary goals and priorities but also on norms and values. At this stage, the agent may involve other agents from his network who give advice and/or who are directly affected by the options he considers. It is also at this stage that the perception of behavioral control comes in: some options are excluded from deeper consideration due to perceived insurmountable hurdles.

Choice of Option

At this point, an agent decides on a course of action, based on his evaluation. It is assumed that he will choose the option which promises a satisfactory outcome or that maximizes the utility of a specific goal (March 1994: 18; Simon *et al.* 1992: 37). This stage connects to Kley's (2011; 2009; Kley and Mulder 2010) image of crossing the Rubicon; after choosing an option, abandoning this choice comes at a psychological cost. Usually at this stage the choice is communicated to the immediate network.

¹⁰⁷ This strategy matches Etzioni's (1967: 389–390) characterization of *fundamental* decisions: "Fundamental decisions are made by exploring the main alternatives the actor sees in view of his conception of his goals, but details and specifications are omitted so that an overview is feasible."

Planning Action

Once a choice is made and communicated beyond the ones directly involved, an agent enters the planning stage, which, in turn requires a number of resulting decisions and actions. Yet, even if an agent is firmly set on one course of action and a time frame for carrying out the behavior, intervening variables may delay, rush or terminate his plans. While planning and action are conceptually different stages, return migration comprises a number of decisions and actions resulting from the intention to relocate. For the purposes of this study, the stages of planning a behavior and action cannot be neatly separated: intervening variables may jeopardize plans, although lesser actions such as booking the plane ticket are already performed. The decision-making process ends with the “final” action of relocation for the purposes of long-term return (at least one year, matching the United Nations’ (Statistics Division 1998: 95) definition of return migrants), although the author is aware that this decision is reversible and that migration entails more actions than physical relocation.

Action and Feedback Loop

Once the action of physical relocation is carried out, the decision maker assesses the new situation and the decision-making process starts over. For return migration, it is the initial migration decision that creates the current feedback loop that lasts for months or even years in the sample. As pointed out above, the feedback loops differs for Type A and Type B decisions: Type A decisions are intended for the long term, which is why agents usually do not immediately consider another relocation, even if they encounter problems to which international movement would be a good solution. Instead, they will generally seek to find a local solution to their problem. In Type B decisions, the agents assess the new situation, and may find that they are satisfied with the temporary return and decide to go through with return migration, deciding to quit their jobs in Japan etc. In other cases, they will be dissatisfied and act correctively.¹⁰⁸

One of the main questions of this study is why and at which point in the migration process some migrants (finally exclude or) include return to China in their list of seriously considered options again. This is because especially in the beginnings of living in a new country, problems are often linked to living in the destination country and return is therefore seen as a solution. However, depending

¹⁰⁸ In Type B decisions, the term feedback loop is used in a narrow sense as suggested by NDM scholars: a previous action is assessed for its impact on the perceived problem; agents may decide to correct it in the feedback loop that ensues after the action. In long-term decisions which stand at the center of interest in this study, the feedback loop designates the new situation that results from performing a behavior. The agent is unlikely to act correctively in the sense that he returns but he makes other decision to improve his situation in the new location.

on the initial goals of migrants, return may not be a feasible option as they want to gain an educational degree or working experience etc. Migrants may therefore choose to seek other solutions or not to act to solve a problem.¹⁰⁹ There are differences by gender and life phase in the various stages of the decision-making process: the framing of the problem, the perception of macro-level factors influencing situation assessment and options, but also behavioral control over one's actions as well as one's position within households and thereby negotiating power differ, justifying the individual as the level of analysis in this study. Time is crucial; if the event, in the understanding of the agent, creates an urgency to act, he skips or cuts short all phases in the decision-making process (most notably the stage of setting new goals). In that case, the event constitutes a problem in the agent's life and, depending on his mental representation of the situation, he will move directly to the evaluation of options to solve the problem.

2.3.3 *Influential Factors*

Migration is a tool to ensure a better life. What constitutes a “good” or “better” life depends on individual goals of migrants.¹¹⁰ These can be roughly divided into three categories, which may overlap: a fulfilling career, rewarding family life, and a life according to one's preferences in terms of lifestyle, hobbies or ideology.¹¹¹ A person strives to achieve the best possible balance of these goals. How goals are defined and which priority is attached to them differs by gender and by individual characteristics. In addition, the importance of these goals changes over the life course, as some goals take precedence over others for a limited amount of time. Some goals may not be clearly attributable to one set of goals but span several

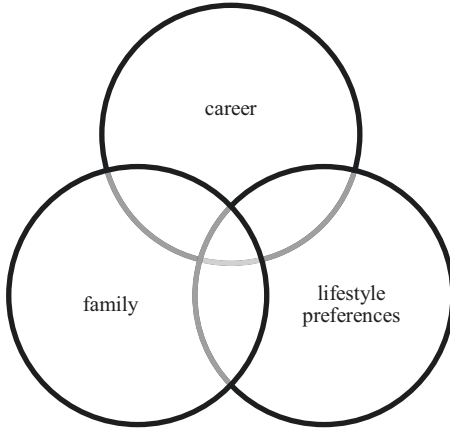
¹⁰⁹ Etzioni (1967: 389–390) states that incremental decisions happen within the confines fundamental decisions have set. (Incrementalism, or “muddling through,” is a concept of political decision making described in detail by Charles E. Lindblom (1959; 1979). Political decision makers take small rather than bold steps toward a policy goal, attracting less criticism.) Initial migration can be seen as a fundamental decision, as it sets the boundaries for subsequent decisions. The decisions made while living in Japan then are incremental decisions, as long as they do not lead to moving. See Achenbach (2014) on Chinese highly skilled women's other strategies to increase work–family balance.

¹¹⁰ Siegwart Lindenberg (1996; Lindenberg and Frey 1993) has conceptualized two overarching goals: physical well-being and social well-being, which cannot be achieved directly but only optimized by achieving the instrumental goals of stimulation, comfort, status, behavioral confirmation and affection (Ormel *et al.* 1999: 61). Although Lindenberg's (1996) conceptualization and Abraham H. Maslow's (1970; 1943) hierarchy of needs overlap, Lindenberg argues against the inclusion of self-actualization, as he claims it is dependent on approval of others (Ormel *et al.* 1999: 69), however, self-actualization is identified as an important goal in this study.

¹¹¹ This is a reduced model that nevertheless includes De Jong and Fawcett's (1981: 50) seven goals of wealth, status (career), affiliation (social and family life) comfort, stimulation, autonomy and morality (lifestyle preferences). These goals overlap in the author's conceptualization, for example, because wealth may be a tool to ensure the well-being of the family.

spheres of family, career and lifestyle preferences.¹¹² Additionally, how they are set depends on behavioral norms, such as gender role ideology. Figure 2.2 shows the influential spheres for migration decisions, depicting that the spheres may overlap.

Figure 2.2: Influential Spheres for Migration Decisions



compiled by the author.

Each individual-level goal can be subdivided into factors that are important to achieving it. These factors exist on various levels. In the following section, factors for the three spheres are presented that were identified in the analysis of the interviews. The influence of the factors differs for various stages of the decision-making process and by gender, which is argued in greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6. If return migration is considered, differences between the factors in host and home country are evaluated as well as the effect of a move on primary goals.

2.3.3.1 Career

There is a vast literature that assumes that wage gaps or economic considerations in general are sufficient to explain movement (see Section 2.1; Kröhnert 2007; Massey *et al.* 1993: 432–434; Piore 1979; Sjaastad 1962; Todaro 1969). Especially

¹¹² One goal that connects all three spheres for highly skilled migrants is work–life (or work–family) balance. The two terms differ in that work–family balance applies only to the assessment that an agent is able to meet demands of both the work place and the family (Voydanoff 2008: 48), while work–life balance juxtaposes the terms work and life, the latter including family life, but also hobbies and other “private” or non-work areas of an agent’s life.

the highly skilled, though, cannot work everywhere in the world in occupations in which they were trained (Faist 1997: 188; Favell, Feldblum and Smith 2006: 17; Meyer 2001); migrants will therefore compare levels of development to ensure finding a job suitable for their skills that is also interesting or challenging for them. Other career factors that are of importance in migration decisions include the (gendered) structure of labor markets, potential for upward mobility (especially of foreigners and/or women), favorable legislation, financial incentives or favorable taxation policy for business founders. Table 2.2 provides an overview of factors considered for several places when thinking about moving, based on findings from the literature and empirical analysis.

Table 2.2: Goals and Influential Factors in the Career Sphere

	individual goals	influential factors
career	high wages	- income level differences - taxation policy/favorable legislation
	challenging work contents	- development of occupation (level of technology) - legislation regarding profession - applicability/transferability of skills
	working styles/prestige	- working styles in specific company - cultural norms about working styles
	upward mobility	- overall state of the economy (demand, openness/discrimination towards foreigners) - career speed
	entrepreneurs: business expansion	- location-specific size and quality of occupational network - restrictions of labor markets
	human capital expansion	- availability/quality of education - job chances - quality and quantity of jobs

compiled by the author.

A migrant possesses incomplete information about most of the larger-level factors and is not able to compute or forecast accurately where he will be most likely to achieve his career goals. Macro-level factors and their perception differ for men and women and for different occupations (see van der Velde, Bossink and Jansen 2005). One factor that has been identified to encourage settlement is the non-transferability of location-specific capital. A migrant must make forecasts about the potential of building up a clientele or the availability of licenses to practice his occupation in another country. Nevertheless, career goals need not take precedence for all highly skilled migrants in all life phases. Migrants may compromise in this realm to ensure other goals. In addition, some of these goals may not only be connected to career considerations: higher earnings, for example, may be a tool to provide for a migrant’s family.

2.3.3.2 Family

Although some publications have dealt with households as decision-making units in migration, they have yet to address negotiation processes and goals of the individual in the family realm. Not all migrants share the goals that are compiled in Table 2.3, and the importance of the goals differs with life phase.

Table 2.3: Goals and Influential Factors in the Family Sphere

	individual goals	concrete measures	influential factors
family	be a good child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fulfill parents' wishes - send remittances - take care of elderly parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural norm of filial piety (and gender role ideology) - insufficient welfare state provisions - immigration policy
	be a good spouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support spouse's career and locational preferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural norms of gender role ideology - job chances/discrimination in different labor markets
	be a good parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure good education - encourage identity formation - provide safe environment - spend time with children - material well- being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quality of educational programs - legislation concerning education - political stability - environmental/food safety - availability of child care services - work-family balance support structures (company-/state-level) - immigration policy

compiled by the author.

In the phase of early adulthood, family factors usually are of less importance, as migrants move away from their closest contacts to invest in human capital (and potentially send back remittances). In the family phase, family considerations usually trump career factors, especially during the first years after having children. With life phase transitions, priorities change and the number of persons involved in the decision-making process rises from negotiating with parents to negotiating with spouse, parents and children. Gender role ideology plays an important role in family factors, as parents of participants have different expectations of daughters and sons, as women and men often occupy different functions in households (for example, in child rearing duties). It influences individual behavioral norms: for example, in order to fulfill one's perception of what constitutes a good parent, good spouse or a caring child to elderly parents, a migrant might return to his country of origin, although his lifestyle and career preferences favored staying in the destination country.

2.3.3.3 Lifestyle Preferences

The category of “lifestyle preferences” includes individual characteristics of a migrant and his lifestyle preferences in a stricter sense. While these preferences are easily given up for family and career goals by some migrants, they constitute primary life goals for others.

Table 2.4: Goals and Influential Factors in the Sphere of Lifestyle Preferences

	individual goals	influential factors
lifestyle preferences	autonomy (freedom/self-actualization)	- legislation - culture - social norms
	live according to political/ ideological/religious convictions	- type of political regime - openness of society towards religiousness
	lifestyle preferences in a narrow sense	- culture - environment - level of development
	rewarding social life	- openness of society

compiled by the author.

Individual characteristics that come into play in this category are, for example, risk averseness, sense of belonging, identity, or political convictions. Depending on the factors in this category, some migrants will categorically exclude moving to certain places, or such a decision will come at a high personal cost.

2.3.4 Outline and Contribution of the Study

The following chapters present results of the study, aiming to answer the question of why some highly skilled Chinese in Japan settle while others return (or move on). A special focus is placed on the underlying question of why some agents adhere to their original migration plan while others deviate, returning earlier or later than originally intended. Chapter 3 contains information on methodology of data collection and analysis, while Chapter 4 places participants’ locational decisions in the relevant context, including the history of Chinese migration to Japan, Japanese immigration policy, the composition of the Chinese population in Japan, and China’s policies aimed at increasing return migration. Chapter 5 and 6 report the results of the study. Chapter 5 explains the decision-making model introduced in Section 2.3.2 in more detail, providing information on various triggers to the process, contents of situation analysis, potential options and perceptions of behavioral control, planning, and action, as well as the resulting feedback loop. After the presentation of the qualitative results of *how* agents make

locational decisions, Chapter 6 quantitatively analyzes the individual decisive and influential factors and examines how they differ in importance for various groups. This results in a holistic explanation of participants' migration behavior.

Previous explanations of return migration have largely reduced it to reactive behavior, usually focusing on only one set of variables, such as earnings or unemployment. The decision-making process was only rarely analyzed, and routinely left out migrants' choices between a number of options to solve ill-structured problems. Quantitative studies focus on the impact of quantifiable factors on moving behavior, but cannot depict the process accurately, such as why migration becomes an option that is considered to solve problems or achieve goals in the first place and how the weighing up of different factors works that leads to the agent picking migration over other options. In order to explain return migration, it is necessary to look at the individual migrant, his priorities and goals over the life course, his position in immediate and extended networks, his behavioral norms, negotiation leverage and agency, and, most importantly, his perception of behavioral control. In order to explain movement, but in particular, to explain deviations from original migration intentions, the integration of perspectives on processes and contents of decision-making is crucial. Understanding how migrants make locational decisions sheds light on their perception of circumstances in Japan and China, how they process information, how different triggers but also framings of the same problem lead to different outcomes and how intervening factors lead to a deviation. The quantitative analysis, in turn, analyzes how factors differ for various groups, how goals shift over the life course influencing the contents of the decision-making process, how men and women vary in their goals and perceptions of how various locations can serve to improve their lives.

The conceptualization of migration decisions described above differs from other migration decision-making models, as it takes into consideration that migration is only one solution to ill-structured problems, that whether migration is chosen depends on the framing of the problem, that multiple participants take part in a potentially unequal negotiation process and that migration affects all aspects of life (family, career, lifestyle). Agents strive for the best balance of hierarchically ranked primary goals. The conceptualization contributes to general decision theory, as it identifies new phases and refines previously identified stages for the case of return migration, and analyzes how these phases are interdependent. Triggers interrupting an agent's routine or plans lead to a reassessment of his current situation, which in turn influences problem framing or which leads, in case a migrant is satisfied with his situation, to setting new life goals. It is especially the phase of option evaluation that is analyzed to understand how a migrant assesses the influence of options on his life goals and why he chooses migration over other options against potential constraints in the field of politics, economics, networks contacts or his own lifestyle preferences. The conceptualization and

sequence of decision-making phases adds to decision-making theory, while the analysis of influential factors to migration theory, integrating the two strings of research. An understanding of return migration decisions of highly skilled Chinese is interesting for various actors for at least three reasons: governments and companies are interested in attracting and retaining the best brains internally and externally for economic growth and their international competitive ability. As mobility increasingly form part of highly skilled workers' lives, knowing what difficulties the widely sought after workers and migrants face and how they make locational and thereby also career and family decisions can be used by national and local governments as well as companies to design better-fitting policies to attract and retain talent, but also to better support migrants in companies and communities, improving migrants' well-being. International exchange also serves political purposes, as it is part of cultural diplomacy and hypothesized to increase "mutual understanding" between different cultures (MEXT 1999; MOFA 1977).¹¹³

¹¹³ "Exchange students will, in the future, not only become people knowledgeable about Japan as they understand Japanese culture, but they are also resources that will carry on Japanese culture into the future with their knowledge and energy supporting the Japanese society, and spreading of the Japanese language and culture to the world." This policy is stressed for the East Asian region and aims at establishing Japan as a "Peaceful Nation" (Council on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy 2005).

3 Data and Methodology

In order to answer the question of why and how highly skilled migrants decide to return or to settle, this study adopts a predominantly qualitative approach while integrating quantitative analysis of the empirical data. Its goal is to design an individual-level migration decision-making model and to unveil factors relevant in locational decisions. The data base of this study is composed of empirical data collected in Japan and China in 2011–12, as well as statistical data from national governments and international organizations and a literature review on migration and decision making. The empirical data collected during three fieldwork periods consists of 112 semi-structured interviews with sample participants and questionnaires distributed to them, as well as 30 expert interviews. As decision-making processes are inherently complex, the author chose semi-structured interviews as a means to allow migrants to reflect on influential factors in the relevant context, on the perception of their situation and options, and the decision-making process itself. This approach enables the researcher to explore and integrate unprompted aspects. Interviews include factors identified in the literature as influential in migration, specifically economic rationales, household size, migration policy and levels of integration. In addition to these data derived from the interviews, participants filled out a questionnaire on network composition and use of these contacts to account for the impact of feelings of integration and network composition on mobility decisions.

While integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches of data collection and analysis, it is individual decision-making processes as well as the interplay of various factors that stand at the center of interest in this study. In order to develop a deeper understanding of agents' locational decisions, perceptions of their situation and whether they have control over their own behavior against external opportunity structures are hypothesized to possess explanatory power, justifying the use of semi-structured interviews to collect these data. A qualitative approach gives the participants of the study the opportunity to bring up issues important to them not previously anticipated by the researcher and to explain their interplay. In in-depth interviews, participants provide the researcher with a nuanced impression of their priorities and worries and weigh different and potentially competing goals against each other. In addition to a qualitative analysis, identified categories were quantified to give the reader an overview of influential factors, which are compared against findings from the literature, thereby integrating the findings into the relevant discourse. In order to validate participants' explanations of levels of

integration and to test the impact of this aspect on migration decisions, quantitative data were collected from the same participants in the form of questionnaires on network composition and use. The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches serves to validate the empirically collected data, to contribute to the current discourse and increase comparability of the findings.

While the analysis of the data collected from sample participants stands at the center of the study, additional data are included in order to contextualize their experiences. 30 expert interviews were conducted with ministry, local government and university officials, staff of human resource departments of international and Japanese companies, as well as scholars and members of civil society organizations.¹¹⁴ Data were collected during three research stays in Japan and China.¹¹⁵ Statistics on immigration and labor market participation in Japan serve as external supplement and validation of the empirical data. Additional sources comprise literature on migration, decision making and Japanese and Chinese migration. Interview data were analyzed qualitatively, and identified factors were additionally coded and could therefore be used for quantitative analyses. Correlations serve to distinguish between the strength of relation between each factor and different groups of agents. This triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data and their analysis, the inclusion of expert interviews, literature and official statistics adds to a holistic perspective on migration decisions of highly skilled Chinese in Japan and underlines the external validity of the research. This chapter presents the methodology of empirical data collection and analysis, including sampling and recruitment, interview content, coding and categorization of results, reflections on the role of the researcher and sample description, as well as limitations of the study.

3.1 Sampling and Recruitment

The population (universe) from which participants were drawn for this study consists of highly skilled workers and students from top-level universities who were born in China and migrated to Japan. As the study seeks to differentiate between reasons that agents anticipate and those that actually prove to be decisive in locational decisions, participants were interviewed both in Japan and in China.

¹¹⁴ Five experts were interviewed more than once.

¹¹⁵ The author interviewed 31 participants of the study during the first research stay from January 1st to March 14th 2011 in Tokyo, Japan, 44 participants during the second stay from September 1st to November 30th 2011 in Tokyo, and 47 return migrants to China from February 21st to April 1st 2012 in Shanghai, Hangzhou and Beijing, PRC. The first research stay in early 2011 was funded by the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung and carried out as a visiting researcher at Waseda University, Tokyo, the second was spent at the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo as a PhD student on a scholarship by the same institute. The last research stay was funded, as were 2.5 years of the study from 2011–13, by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Size and composition of this specific population of highly skilled workers, entrepreneurs and students of Chinese origin that follow(ed) this high-level educational trajectory, or who are now working in managing positions in Japan or China, is unknown, which is why it is impossible to draw a random sample representative of this universe.¹¹⁶ What is known of highly skilled workers in Japan, however, is that the majority enters on student visas (as is supported by national immigration policy favoring student migration, see Chapter 4), enters the labor market after graduation and that most of students (43.9% in 2015) are Chinese (Liu-Farrer 2011; MIC 2016b). Options for increased generalizability could be to use a quota sample; yet, immigration statistics differentiate by occupation, but not type of employment or hierarchy level (skill-levels of holders of Japanese nationality or of spousal visas are unknown), and they differentiate by region of origin but not skill level. Information about either occupation or region of origin is too unspecific to define the universe from which to take a quota sample. In addition, to answer how life course events, occupation, generational differences etc. affect migration decisions, agents from different occupations, generations and life phases had to be interviewed. For these reasons, this study adopts purposive sampling (Friedrichs 1973: 130–135).¹¹⁷ The following paragraphs present the criteria which participants of the study had to fulfill, followed by a description of recruitment methods. The composition of the sample does, in part, reflect what is known of the Chinese population and highly skilled in Japan as it mirrors typical trajectories, yet the results of this study are not generalizable beyond the sample.

As fieldwork sites, Tokyo, Shanghai, (Hangzhou) and Beijing were selected. At the time of fieldwork in 2011, most Chinese and most foreign workers were registered in Tokyo (MHLW 2012; MOJ 2012a),¹¹⁸ while Beijing and Shanghai are the cities that attract the most returnees.¹¹⁹ The numerical goal of sampling was to recruit 30 students and 30 highly skilled workers in Japan, as well as another 30 in China. Of these workers, at least 10% were entrepreneurs. A quota was chosen for entrepreneurs in the sample of this study, because “in many OECD countries foreign migrants often pursue entrepreneurial activities” (OECD 2010), a relationship that has also been hypothesized to exist for return migrants (Démurger

¹¹⁶ It is difficult to get information on return rates, as the Japanese Immigration Bureau does not differentiate between onward or return migration of foreign passport-holders in Japan, and Chinese statistics only give fragmented information on skill level or country of destination.

¹¹⁷ See Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (1994: 27–34) for a discussion of the benefits of using purposive sampling in qualitative studies.

¹¹⁸ See Section 4.3 on the composition of the Chinese population in Japan.

¹¹⁹ Guangzhou and Shenzhen are the other two of four cities that together attracted almost 59% of returnees looking for employment in 2013 (Zhang 2014/03/30). In a chapter from 2003, Luo (2003: 299) explains that Shanghai is host to 22.7% of returning migrants to China.

and Xu 2010).¹²⁰ Instead of a longitudinal design, in this study, participants were sampled so as to map the trajectories of highly skilled Chinese migrants in Japan, combining prospective, current and retrospective perspectives in an integrated research design. This trajectory consists of language school and subsequent university education, followed by working experience in Japan. Therefore, students in language school as well as in B.A., M.A. and PhD programs form part of the sample as well as young workers just starting out in their careers,¹²¹ but also workers from different occupations in different stages of their careers. For this reason, the sample is heterogeneous in terms of age and occupation. This serves to identify common themes influential in locational decisions, while comparisons can be drawn between groups.

Criteria for the inclusion in the sample were place of birth, (planned) length and purpose of stay in Japan, formal level of education or training and/or position in the company hierarchy, occupational field as well as company size for entrepreneurs. All participants were born with Chinese nationality, although they were not excluded from the sample if they had changed it over the course of migration. Participants had to be/have been long-term migrants, although four short-term migrants with stays of one year were also included.¹²² The United Nations (UN) define “long-term migrant” as

“a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence,”

while a

“short-term migrant is a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least three months but less than a year (12 months) except in cases where the movement to that country is for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends or relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage” (United Nations Statistics Division 1998: 18).

In this study the term “return migrants,” again drawing from a UN definition, refers to persons returning to their country of birth after having been international

¹²⁰ Reasons for this are manifold, including, for example, the wish to cash in on specialist knowledge in the exchange between country of origin and destination, but also the inability to find employment with sufficient upward mobility etc.

¹²¹ The Japanese labor market is highly segregated by educational attainment in the sense that specific companies as well as Japanese bureaucracy usually recruit from particular top-level universities (Kawaguchi and Ono 2013). It is for this reason that young workers are included in the sample based on university affiliation, reflecting the logic of the Japanese recruitment system.

¹²² The original research design only examined long-term migrants, but it showed that some migrants, who originally only had spent one year in Japan as dispatched workers or exchange students, returned to Japan or extended their stay there. In order to differentiate between factors important to these workers and students that led to a prolonged stay in Japan and to those that decided to return, four migrants with a stay of only one year in Japan are also included in the sample.

migrants in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008: 164–165; United Nations Statistics Division 1998: 95). Purposes of stay had to be educational or work-related. Japanese migration policy has focused on student migration as the main path for skilled workers to enter the Japanese labor market, a phenomenon Liu-Farrer (2009a) termed “educationally channeled labor mobility.” Additionally, Japan’s labor market is segregated by educational attainment, further underlining the importance of formal education. The concept of skilled labor was addressed in Section 2.1.5, pointing out the different definitions of skills by tertiary degrees, occupation or responsibility; translated into criteria for participant selection, it means that students were recruited from top universities,¹²³ and workers either also by university (for those starting out) or by occupation, position in the company hierarchy or size of enterprise. One reason to choose students from top-level universities is not that students of less prestigious universities most certainly will

¹²³ In the coding process, universities were ranked on a scale of 1 to 10. Tokyo University and Waseda University were numbers 1 and 2, respectively, as they are the most well-known Japanese universities in China. The reason for Waseda University’s reputation lies in the fact that numerous Chinese scholars and politicians attended Waseda since 1899, a fact highlighted by President Hu Jintao during his visit to Waseda University in 2008 (China Embassy 2008/07/20). Tokyo University is internationally known as the highest ranking Japanese university (CWCU 2014; Quacquarelli Symonds 2013; Times Higher Education 2014). Chinese students to Japan usually aim at admission to Waseda or Tokyo University. Other universities, despite the quality of their programs and high ranks in national rankings, are generally less attractive to the majority of participants. All other universities were ranked according to the QS Survey (Quacquarelli Symonds 2013), Shanghai Jiaotong Survey (CWCU 2014), *Times Higher Education* (2014) Survey and the Toyo Keizai (2013/02/15) as well as Yozemi (2013) ranking. Some Japanese universities, for example Hitotsubashi University, are not ranked in the international surveys but are top ranked in national surveys. They were included in the high ranks as students need to think not only of the employment chances with a degree from a specific university in China, but since most want to gain working experience in Japan, the ranking of the Japanese university is not negligible. A mean value based on the ranking in those three international and national surveys was calculated for each university, resulting in the following ranking for the purposes of this study: ranks 1–3 (Tokyo (1), Waseda (2), Hitotsubashi, Kyoto and Keio University (3)), top universities in ranks 4–5 (Osaka, Kyushu, Tohoku, Hokkaido, Doshisha, Sophia, Tsukuba, Nagoya University and Tokyo Institute of Technology (4), Hiroshima, Ritsumeikan, Kobe, Yokohama and International Christian University (5)), prestigious universities on rank 6 (MARCH: Meiji, Aoyama, Rikkyo, Chuo, Hosei University), upper-middle level universities on rank 7 (Meiji Gakuin, Shiga, Aichi University), lower-middle-level universities on rank 8, lower-level universities on rank 9 and *senmon gakkō* on rank 10. The author is aware of the fact that the rankings do not measure the quality of education by generalizable means but that reputation, for example, is one of the factors influencing a university’s rank (Guttenplan 2013/04/12). Chinese students coming to Japan pay close attention to the ranking of universities, because not only the Japanese bureaucracy but also Japanese companies often recruit from the top five universities: Tokyo, Kyoto, Keio, Waseda and Hitotsubashi University (Cutts 1997: 5). Students were included in the sample if they attended universities in Japan ranked 1–4. 7 students attended universities ranked 5, 6 and 7, yet had attended top-level Chinese universities such as Tsinghua, Beijing, Fudan, Beijing Normal or Zhejiang University, which are the top-ranking Chinese universities (CWCU 2014; Quacquarelli Symonds 2013; Times Higher Education 2014).

have worse careers, although they are in a less favorable starting position.¹²⁴ This sampling choice reflects bias in Japan's immigration policy that targets the highly skilled and an employment system that favors graduates of certain universities, as university education plays a strong role in elite formation in Japan: "what sets Japan apart from the experiences of other countries is the extent to which individuals' socioeconomic success is determined by the prestige of the universities from which they graduate" (Kawaguchi and Ono 2013: 3). An analysis of how career outcomes vary among different-level universities is not part of this study. If students from low-ranking universities had been included, they would have differed from their peers from high-ranking universities in that career chances would be unequally distributed, thereby jeopardizing the validity of the findings for highly skilled Chinese in Japan. One difficulty in the selection of entrepreneurs was the definition of who is highly skilled and makes a "valuable contribution" to an economy, which is the underlying logic in the recruitment of highly skilled migrants. Turnover, especially for a new enterprise, is not a reliable variable. A benefit associated with entrepreneurs is job generation (Kingston 2013/05/19). Therefore, entrepreneurs were included in the sample if they employed at least five workers and worked in a "skilled" field, e.g. IT.¹²⁵

Recruitment and subsequent interviewing (and distribution of questionnaires) was carried out in three fieldwork phases of eight months total in 2011–12. In order to diversify the networks from which the 122 participants were drawn, the study integrated different recruiting methods. Using personal and university contacts, potential interviewees were introduced and the author approached others at networking (e.g. of volunteer groups) or *shūshoku katsudō* ("job hunting") events.¹²⁶ Of the 75 persons interviewed in Japan, 29 were approached at these events, while 22 were introduced by a Chinese and 24 by non-Chinese.¹²⁷ By diversifying recruitment channels, the author aimed to avoid the pitfalls of snowball sampling: interviewing people with similar background and similar attitudes.¹²⁸ For the sample taken in China, the picture is markedly different, as all participants were recruited through introductions, 42 through Chinese contacts and

¹²⁴ In fact, Liu-Farrer (2012) argues that it is precisely the non-highly skilled who play an important role in the transnational economy.

¹²⁵ This refers to any point in their entrepreneurial history; one entrepreneur had to cut staff after the economic crisis of 2008, yet it still included in the sample.

¹²⁶ Events included meetings of a regional chamber of commerce, of occupational or student networks (of top-level universities) and Chinese volunteer groups, but also religious and cultural events,

¹²⁷ In Japan, it is common to use middlemen when approaching potential interview partners (Hommerich 2009: 167).

¹²⁸ Following Guba and Lincoln's (1989) call for maximum variation (see also Miles and Huberman 1994: 29), the author answered participants' questions about who would be a desirable candidate for an interview from their network that she was looking for larger variety of opinions. This strategy of diversification of the sample acquired through snowballing in addition to recruiting almost "at random" at events and networking organizations leads to a diverse sample that can be argued to reflect the "universe" of Chinese highly skilled seen as desirable by the government in Japan.

5 through non-Chinese.¹²⁹ Therefore, the sample drawn in China is more homogeneous, e.g. in terms of occupation, as a larger share of participants (26 out of 47, 55.3%) works in the finance industry (see Section 3.5).

When approaching potential participants, they were informed that the interviews would revolve around their lives in Japan, as the study focused on the experiences of Chinese highly skilled workers and students in Japan. If agents were introduced personally or via email, they received an invitation to the interview separately. Especially in the case of introductions, it was unclear before the first meeting whether agents fit the criteria for this study or whether the skill level was sufficient, which is why of the 122 interviews that were conducted with potential participants in Japan and China, only 112 are included in the study. 6 of these 10 interviews were excluded because of participants' insufficient skill levels: one agent was interviewed while still in language school but only entered a lower-/middle-ranking university, while five only possessed degrees from *senmon gakkō* and had not entered skilled business fields, working, for example, in travel agencies or the restaurant business. One participant was excluded due to errors in the interview, and three did not fulfill the criteria of being Chinese migrants in Japan (see Section 3.5).

3.2 Content of Interviews

Before discussing the qualitative and quantitative results of the interviews in Chapters 5 and 6, this subsection presents the contents of the interviews and the rationale for their structure. As the aim of the study is to analyze return migration decisions, it was to be expected that participants would touch upon career aspects but also more personal issues such as family, identity, discrimination and generally problems of any kind. For these reasons, it was necessary to create an interview atmosphere in which the participants felt free to bring up issues from various spheres themselves, talk openly about priorities but also problems and concerns. Therefore, a semi-structured interviewing method was chosen to give participants enough room to express their reasoning for locational decisions, and to enable the interviewer to pursue new factors participants introduced or to further investigate certain issues (Friedrichs 1973: 224–236).¹³⁰ As it is important for this type of

¹²⁹ The reason for the small percentage of cold recruitment in China lies in the less organized structured of returnees from Japan as opposed to ethnic occupational networks of Chinese in Japan. "Returnee" organizations usually dissolve fast once participants have reintegrated into Chinese society in their private and working lives. However, personal networks based, for example, on university affiliation during the time in Japan, persist.

¹³⁰ In the case of semi-structured interviews, the interview guide includes "an outline of topics to be covered, with suggested questions" (Kvale 1996: 129). There can be some flexibility as to the order of the questions (if a participant brings up a topic to be addressed later on earlier in the interview), but the author mostly kept to the sequence of questions as envisioned in the interview guide so as not to

research question to unearth “meaningful relations” (Kvale 1996: 11) between factors, participants were encouraged to reflect on a variety of issues. Particular attention was given to the accounts of migration decision-making and participants were asked to elaborate on the process without sticking to the questionnaire (as recommended for turning points in life by Gibbs 2007: 59).

At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked for their permission for the recording of the interview, they were ensured anonymity, were informed that the interviews usually lasted for about 40 minutes and that they could choose and switch between languages during the interview.¹³¹ They could refuse to answer specific questions and stop the interview at any time. Contents would cover their visa status, educational trajectory, goals and networks. Before starting the interview, participants were asked to fill out a face sheet to collect information on name, age, gender, contact information, family size/location and marital status, place of birth and nationality, educational background in Japan and China, length of stay in Japan, occupation, visa category and membership in foreigners’ associations.¹³² Based on this written information, potentially uncomfortable (or unnecessary) questions could be excluded from the interview.

The first topic covered in the semi-structured interviews was visa status; with this introduction, agents could reflect on their process of coming to Japan, on their initial reasons for the choice of Japan, their impression of Japan’s immigration policy and its potential impact on length of stay. As the group that stands at the center of interest in this study is focused on highly skilled workers and students with valid visas, this topic proved to be a good base for the following more

influence participants’ answers and to ensure comparability. Also see Rainer Schnell, Paul B. Hill and Elke Esser (2011: 316) for more information on semi-structured interviews.

¹³¹ Of the 112 interviews included in this study, 79 were conducted in Japanese, 15 in English and 18 in a mix of Chinese, Japanese and English (see appendix) as the participants could choose the language themselves. Explanations for participants’ choice against conducting the interviews in only Chinese are most likely connected to the interviewer, whose English and Japanese language skills are better developed than the Chinese. However, participants nonetheless chose to use Chinese to further explain certain (often emotional) topics or to describe things perceived as “typically Chinese” relying on the interviewer’s understanding of the language. Those participants who chose English explained this with the wish to practice. By choosing not to conduct the interviews in the participants’ native language, the author also got a good picture of their Japanese and English language proficiency, indicators for the possibility of communication and therefore interaction with Japanese and non-Japanese in Japan. Conducting the interviews in different languages could entail a confusing cultural element. Kvale (2007: 68) refers to the importance of being culturally sensitive to gestures, formulations, and taboos across cultures (but also generations) that might affect the interview. The author’s familiarity with Tokyo, Shanghai and Beijing settings and differences in cultures helped overcome potential obstacles. In addition, the cross-cultural context enabled the interviewer to also observe the degree of cultural proficiency when the interviews were conducted in Japanese.

¹³² Face sheet, network questionnaire and interview guide (in English and Japanese) are listed in the appendix. Face sheet and network questionnaire are bilingual (Japanese/English), while some of the categories such as educational background are only written in Japanese (due to the fact that participants’ mother tongue was Chinese, all of them could read the Japanese terms for different levels of education).

emotional or difficult issues. The subsequent block of questions referred to agents' lives in China before coming to Japan: socioeconomic background, origin and potential migration history within China, relationship with parents and friends, size of and contact with their social networks in China as well as agents' educational and occupational trajectories before coming to Japan. This topic served to deepen the understanding of agents' levels of integration in China (and their location-specific capital), their reasons for initial migration but also their perception of chances for a successful career and family life upon return. The following questions focused on decision-making processes, including timing, preparation, previous international migration experience, inclusion of other agents in decision-making processes, choice of destination and motivation. After this emphasis on agents' lives before coming to Japan, the next section of the interview focused on agents' experiences in Japan. Topics covered included employment status (size/type of company, hiring process, job switches, job satisfaction etc.), choice of university, housing, networks in Japan and China including frequency of contact (and language use). Agents were also asked about their future plans for migration or settlement. At the end of the interview, agents were asked about their more general life goals and priorities, as well as their evaluation of their time in Japan. Once the formal interview was finished, participants could ask questions in return before filling out the questionnaire on network size and demographic composition in Japan and China, and how they used those contacts in various situations (such as free-time activities or in times of financial troubles).

This order of topics was chosen so that first, non-emotional subjects would be covered that provided an impression of the participants' background, rationale for initial migration and level of integration in China. During this first section, participants could build up trust and hence talked more freely and in depth about their migration process, their problems but also their appreciation of life in Japan and their priorities in life later in the interview. This in-depth interviewing approach was chosen so as to enable participants to talk about their attitudes towards living in Japan and returning to China, but also address factors potentially inhibiting their preferred behavior.¹³³

3.3 Coding and Categorization of Results

All interviews with participants of the study but also with experts were translated from Japanese and Chinese into English and (in the case of English-language interviews) directly transcribed personally by the author to ensure

¹³³ Zeithammer and Kellogg (2013: 659) criticize surveys that only focus on attitudes about return as those "dramatically overpredict" the scale of people returning; this risk is reduced if a more holistic depiction of agents' lives can be obtained during the interviews.

comparability.¹³⁴ For the interviews with participants, three rounds of coding were carried out using the software MaxQDA following transcription/ translation. As Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1998) described in their comprehensive account on coding data, open, axial and selective coding methods were applied. In the coding process, the researcher looks for phenomena (*categories* in grounded theory): **“repeated patterns of happenings, events, or actions/interactions that represent what people do or say, alone or together, in response to the problems and situations in which they find themselves”** (bold print in the original, Strauss and Corbin 1998: 130). Each phenomenon is shaped by *conditions* that “create the situations, issues, and problems pertaining to a phenomenon and, to a certain extent, explain why and how persons or groups respond in certain ways” (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 130). It is the task of the researcher to link the conditions to the phenomenon to find out which conditions have explanatory power.¹³⁵ The phenomenon to be studied is migration decisions: whether and when people decide to stay in Japan, return to China or delay the decision. The most important conditions for these phenomena were identified in the open and subsequent axial and selective coding process and checked with statistical analyses such as correlations. This way, a model of decision-making processes was generated and factors that influence the decision-making process were identified. Interviews were, therefore, both analyzed qualitatively using the methods of coding outlined by Strauss and Corbin and quantitatively, using frequency analyses and converting qualitative data to categories suitable to carrying out statistical analyses with the software SPSS.

The process dimension of the decision-making model is based on the qualitative analysis of the interviews, contextualized with decision-making theory after the analysis of the empirical data. Results are reported in Chapter 5. The categorization of influential factors is the result of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A word frequency analysis of the interviews (conducted after their qualitative analysis) underscored the importance of three spheres identified during the coding processes, namely of career, family and lifestyle preferences. For statistical analysis, decisive factors and influential factors in the order mentioned by participants were included in the data set. Descriptive statistics such as frequency analyses of influential and decisive factors but also correlations comparing the influence of factors for different groups of agents are included in Chapter 6. Based on the sorting of influential factors into spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences, single influential factors were aggregated to test the

¹³⁴ It is important to point out that one person translated all interviews to ensure Japanese and Chinese expressions were translated the same way throughout all interviews.

¹³⁵ Strauss and Corbin (1998: 130) suggest conditions that “arise out of time, place, culture, rules, regulations, beliefs, economics, power, or gender factors as well as social worlds, organizations, and institutions in which we find ourselves along with our personal motivations and biographies.”

relation between factors and different groups of agents.¹³⁶ In addition, variables were defined for the most important categories identified in the qualitative analysis of the interviews (such as attitudes towards living in Japan/China, feelings of integration or perception of the quality of job chances in both locations). The data set further includes demographic information on participants and their trajectories, as well as stage in the decision-making process, career- and family-related life phase. The influence of various factors was tested for different groups: those who had made the decision to return or settle and those considering different options, by career- and family-related life phase, gender and occupation; results for the impact of various factors are reported in Chapter 6. Although the underlying argumentation of this study is that agents make decisions based on their perception of various factors (see Chapter 5), quantifiable data were sought from the agents on their levels of integration as they filled out network questionnaires. Agents gave information on network size, composition, frequency of contact, and how they used various contacts.¹³⁷ Both qualitative and quantitative methods were therefore used in data analysis to validate findings and integrate perspectives to paint a more holistic picture of migration decisions.

3.4 Role of the Researcher

Gender, ethnicity and nationality of the researcher influenced the interviews in various ways. The fact that the researcher conducting the interviews was neither Chinese nor Japanese, but German did influence the communication strategy and content of information given by the participant. On the one hand, the author's non-Japanese background seemed to infer a feeling of being in the same situation (being in Japan as a non-Japanese), while at the same time causing the need to explain the particular circumstances of being in Japan as a "non-Westerner" and specifically, as a *Chinese*.¹³⁸ The introductory questions to the interview relating to participants' visa status could stress a division between mainstream society and members of society born outside of Japan, yet the foreigner status of the researcher

¹³⁶ Factor groups included the general groups of career, family, lifestyle preferences and systemic factors, but they were subdivided by whether they related to Japan or China and whether they were positive or negative, whether they referred to parents, spouse or children (in China or Japan), whether they related to the agents' character, identity or goals and were positive or negative towards Japan and China. Finally, the individual factors were also divided by whether they referred to China and Japan in a positive or negative way. In Chapter 6, these impact of these individual and grouped factors are analyzed for various groups.

¹³⁷ This information distinguishes between nationality of the network contact (Chinese, Japanese, other) and relation to the participant (co-worker, friend, family member). This information was grouped as well (to ease the fragmented character of results) to Chinese, Japanese and other and only if indicated by theory, the relation was included as well in the reporting of results.

¹³⁸ Participants often asked how the author felt about certain issues in Japan at the end of the interview, sometimes directly referring to the German nationality, or asked questions about Europe.

interested in migration trajectories weakened the emotional aspect of these questions.¹³⁹ Participants did not have to conform to Chinese or Japanese rules of communication and could therefore speak freely on subjects that might be taboo in a Japanese or Chinese context.¹⁴⁰ The need to explain their situation to a person in a similar situation, but who is an outsider to their group meant that they explored both positive and negative aspects of living in Japan and China in great detail.¹⁴¹ Among those who only recently arrived in Japan none seemed to fear making mistakes when speaking Japanese or English; participants freely switched between languages when they lacked the appropriate word in the main interview language.

Especially women confided personal issues seeking an outside, but female perspective after speaking in depth about their personal lives and migration decisions during the interview, which led to greater insight into the lives of female participants. Information which the participants shared after the official interview ended is not included in this study for ethical reasons.¹⁴² There were no clues suggesting that the gender of the interviewer/author had an influence on the way participants referred to their decision-making processes.

Overall, ethnicity and gender of the researcher have had an impact on the interviews, but most probably did not falsify the information given.¹⁴³

3.5 Sample Description

In order to be included in the sample, participants had to fulfill the following criteria: they held Chinese nationality at birth, had spent or were planning to spend at least one year in Japan¹⁴⁴ for educational or work-related reasons, held a university degree from a top-level Chinese or Japanese university and/or held at least a position in the middle management or worked in an occupation requiring specialized knowledge, such as IT. For entrepreneurs, company size in addition to work contents were used as criteria.

¹³⁹ Stressing this aspect could have led to a feeling of not-belonging or of being an unnatural member of Japanese society if asked by a member of mainstream Japanese society.

¹⁴⁰ See Hommerich (2009) on the importance of cultural aspects in interview situations in Japan.

¹⁴¹ It can be assumed that participants explained some issues in greater depth than they would have if the interviewer/researcher had been Japanese or Chinese and had understood their situation based on their respective group membership.

¹⁴² The same applies to information the participants explicitly gave after asking for confidentiality. Kvale (2007: 28–30) discusses the ethical issues connected to participants confiding more than they are comfortable with due to the intimacy of interview situations.

¹⁴³ Some men complained of a lack of upward mobility for women in Japan, a topic which possibly might have been discussed to a lesser extent with a male interviewer. However, as this issue might be important to participants' wives and household income, there is no reason to discard this as an issue influencing locational decisions of the household.

¹⁴⁴ Participants were only included in the sample if they had resided in a metropolitan region of Japan to ensure comparability; 106 lived in Tokyo during their time in Japan, 6 in other metropolitan regions.

Interviews with potential participants (excluding experts) were conducted with 122 agents in Japan and China outside of the participant's home or work place to avoid inhibitions to talking about private or career problems.¹⁴⁵ However, only 112 participants are included in this study. Six were excluded as they could not be considered highly skilled (among these only one due to low-ranking university education¹⁴⁶ and five due to degrees from *senmon gakkō* in addition to low- or medium-skilled business fields), one due to errors in the interview, one because of her origin in Hong Kong and two because they had never actually spent more than a couple of weeks in Japan to conduct business. As explained in Section 3.1, graduates from lower-ranking universities have different career chances on the Japanese labor market; an inclusion of these participants could therefore jeopardize the validity of the findings. Short-term visits differ in quality from long-term migration and are not suitable cases to study return migration decisions. Hong Kong Chinese, although they may think of going to China as a next step in their migration trajectory, are socialized differently from nationals of the PRC, which is why one participant from Hong Kong was excluded. On average, interviews lasted 45:06 minutes. Interviews were numbered consecutively; a list of participants by interview number is included in the appendix.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ In two cases, participants preferred the interview to be held in a private room at their work place. Usually, interviews took place at a café or restaurant. While this type of interview situation may not be ideal as the presence of other persons may deter the participant to openly touch upon stressful situations, the ability to switch languages and the feeling of anonymity in cafés and restaurants were rather helpful. In addition, this approach also had practical reasons: as many of the participants were busy with demanding work and family tasks, interviews during the lunch break or before the commute home proved a practical solution to meet the different demands.

¹⁴⁶ This agent was interviewed when he was still in language school, had only a high school degree from China and then entered a lower-middle level university in Japan.

¹⁴⁷ This list includes the month of the interview, language, nationality, gender, occupation, year entered Japan, number of years in Japan, entering visa, region of origin and the age category of the participants. Of 112 participants, 9 were interviewed more than once. Seven of the participants were interviewed once before and once after the events of March 11, 2011, one of them before and after 3/11 in Japan and one more time in China, and one of them twice before 3/11. All of the persons included in the sample were born on Chinese, not Japanese, territory. Even though five out of 112 have taken on Japanese nationality, this does not mean they also feel "naturalized." One has taken on U.S. American nationality. Although some may have planned on staying in Japan long-term, they returned. And others, who planned on staying only temporarily, have extended their stays by more than 20 years. Therefore, neither the time frame nor identity issues justify the use of another term but "Chinese migrant." In this study the term explicitly includes people of Chinese origin with Chinese or other citizenships who have switched locations internationally at least once, regardless of their intended length of stay. Many terms have been used to characterize (ethnic) Chinese living outside of the PRC's territory (this question is explored further in Chapter 4). In Japanese, most often the term *kakyoō* is applied, the equivalent of the Chinese *huaqiao* or the English overseas Chinese (Tan 2013: 2). In this study, the term "Chinese migrants" is used (or "overseas Chinese").

Table 3.1: Features of Sample Participants (start)¹⁴⁸

	total sample	sample taken in Japan	sample taken in China		
			Shanghai/ Hangzhou	Beijing	total China
sample by location of interview	112	69	24	19	<i>43</i>
gender (n=112)					
- male	61	29	19	13	<i>32</i>
- female	51	40	5	6	<i>11</i>
age (n=112)					
- 18–29	36	28	4	4	<i>8</i>
- 20–39	38	26	5	7	<i>12</i>
- 40–49	26	10	11	5	<i>16</i>
- 50+	12	5	4	3	<i>7</i>
average time spent in Japan	9.46	10.49	8.16	7.37	<i>7.81</i>
marital status (n=112)					
- single	47	37	4	6	<i>10</i>
- in a relationship	12	8	3	1	<i>4</i>
- married	51	22	17	12	<i>19</i>
- divorced/widowed	2	2	0	0	<i>0</i>
children's age (n=112)					
- no children	80	55	14	11	<i>25</i>
- 0–5	11	8	2	1	<i>3</i>
- 6–18	17	5	6	6	<i>12</i>
- 18+	4	1	2	1	<i>3</i>
age of oldest parent (n=112)					
- younger than 50	9	8	1	0	<i>1</i>
- 50–59	39	28	5	6	<i>11</i>
- 60–60	38	23	9	6	<i>15</i>
- 70–79	11	5	4	2	<i>6</i>
- 80+	6	3	2	1	<i>3</i>
- passed	9	2	3	4	<i>7</i>
educational level (n=112)					
- no degree ¹⁴⁹	11	10	0	1	<i>1</i>
- <i>senmon gakkō</i> /short-term university ¹⁵⁰	3	2	1	0	<i>1</i>
- bachelor	45	30	9	6	<i>15</i>
- master	41	21	10	10	<i>20</i>
- PhD	12	6	4	2	<i>6</i>

¹⁴⁸ In this description of the sample, further information on sample attributes is provided that is not included in the appendix to ensure anonymity of the participants.

¹⁴⁹ All of these participants are students in bachelor programs and therefore included in this study.

¹⁵⁰ The three sample participants with lower-level educational degrees are included for their work contents/position in the company hierarchy: one works in IT (and resides in Japan on an engineering visa), one is self-employed and another one is managing partner in a company working in trade between Japan and China.

Table 3.1: Features of Sample Participants (continued 1)

	total sample	sample taken in Japan	sample taken in China		
			Shanghai/ Hangzhou	Beijing	total China
occupation (n=112)					
- managers/executives	15	6	5	4	9
- middle management	20	8	6	6	12
- engineers/technicians	10	4	2	4	6
- academics/scientists	11	7	4	0	4
- entrepreneurs	15	8	4	3	7
- students	41	36	3	2	5
work/study contents (n=112)					
- finance/consulting	28	10	9	9	18
- engineering	11	5	2	4	6
- sales/trade	25	21	4	0	4
- education/research	24	17	5	2	7
- IT	15	9	3	3	6
- law	5	4	1	0	1
- other	4	3	0	1	1
entering visa ¹⁵¹ (n=112)					
- <i>kenshū</i>	2	1	0	1	1
- <i>shūgaku/ryūgaku</i>	89	54	20	15	35
- <i>kenkyū</i>	1	0	0	1	1
- <i>gijutsu</i>	7	3	2	2	4
- <i>kazoku taizai</i>	3	1	2	0	2
- <i>Nihonjin no haigūsha</i>	1	1	0	0	0
- <i>teijūsha</i>	5	5	0	0	0
- “working” visa	1	1	0	0	0
- intra-firm transferee	2	2	0	0	0
- <i>ejūsha no haigūsha</i>	1	1	0	0	0
current/last visa (n=112)					
- Japanese nationality	4	3	1	0	1
- <i>ryūgaku</i>	49	30	9	10	19
- <i>kenkyū</i>	5	3	1	1	2
- cultural activities	1	1	0	0	0
- <i>kokusai gyōmu</i>	9	6	3	0	3
- <i>keiei</i>	7	1	3	3	6
- <i>gijutsu</i>	9	4	2	3	5
- <i>kyōju</i>	3	3	0	0	0
- <i>kazoku taizai</i>	2	1	1	0	1
- <i>ejūsha</i>	21	16	3	2	5
- “working” visa	1	0	1	0	1
- intra-firm transferee	1	1	0	0	0

¹⁵¹ Translation of the visa categories: trainee (*kenshū*), students (*shūgaku/ryūgaku*), researcher (*kenkyū*), engineer (*gijutsu*), family visa (*kazoku taizai*), spouse of a Japanese national (*Nihonjin no haigūsha*), long-term resident (*teijūsha*), spouse of a permanent resident (*ejūsha no haigūsha*), specialist in humanities/international services (*jinbun chishiki/kokusai gyōmu*), investor/business manager (*tōshi/keiei*), professor (*kyōju*) and permanent resident (*ejūsha*); see also Chapter 4.

Table 3.1: Features of Sample Participants (continued 2)

	total sample	sample taken in Japan	sample taken in China		
			Shanghai/Hangzhou	Beijing	total China
region of origin ¹⁵² (n=112)					
- Northeastern China	28	19	1	8	9
- Eastern China	32	21	7	4	11
- Beijing	12	8	2	2	4
- Shanghai	17	9	7	1	8
- Central China	14	8	3	3	6
- Western China	7	2	4	1	5
- autonomous regions	2	2	0	0	0
working experience (n=83) in					
- Japanese companies	63	34	16	13	29
- Chinese companies	56	24	19	13	32
- international companies	17	10	4	3	7
- own companies	18	9	6	3	9
- has switched jobs during career ¹⁵³	58	27	18	13	31
sticking to initial plan (n=112)					
- absence of set time frame	13	6	4	3	7
- yes	52	36	11	5	16
- earlier	19	7	5	7	12
- later	28	20	4	4	8
firmness of locational decision	<u>n=111</u>	<u>n=68</u>	<u>n=24</u>	<u>n=19</u>	<u>n=43</u>
- returned to China	43	0	24	19	43
- considering return	47	47	0	0	0
- unsure whether to return	11	11	0	0	0
- settled in Japan	10	10	0	0	0

compiled by the author.

¹⁵² The classification of regions into Northeastern, Eastern, Central and Western China is based on official economic regionalization (Lu and Deng 2011: 3): Northeastern China includes the provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang, Eastern China contains Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong and Hainan, Central China encompasses Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei and Hunan, while Western China entails Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang. The division into four instead of three (Eastern, Central, and Western China) zones was chosen, because of the Northeastern region's historical ties to Japan (Japanese installing of Manchukuo, a puppet state after the 1931 Mukden Incident). Fan (2008: 27–28), drawing from the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985–90), groups Inner Mongolia with Central and Guangxi with Eastern China. As no participant was from Guangxi, this difference is negligible. Yet, the study goes one step further in distinguishing Ningxia and Inner Mongolia as autonomous regions and Shanghai and Beijing as the main economic centers.

¹⁵³ Only participants with working experience are included in this category. 33 students without prior working experience are excluded. 21 participants had not switched jobs at the time of the interview.

The sample examined in this study probably does not represent the universe of highly skilled Chinese migrants in Japan, yet, not much is known about this universe if the criteria of this study are applied (ranking of university, position in the company hierarchy, occupation). Almost 80% of the sample was from Eastern/Northeastern China, reflecting the regions of origin of Chinese (students) in Japan (Liu-Farrer 2011: 23–26; 2009b: 122; Tajima 2003: 70–71).¹⁵⁴ Mirroring the typical educational trajectories of highly skilled workers in Japan (shaped by Japan’s immigration policy), 88% of participants entered Japan for the primary purpose of education.¹⁵⁵ Majors and occupations of students and workers in Japan were purposely chosen with variation to identify similar patterns within a diverse group and to create the possibility for comparisons between groups.¹⁵⁶ In order to mirror the trajectories of highly skilled migrants in Japan, participants were also purposely included with a variety in age and length of stay in order to trace factors that are of importance in various life phases and to show how their impact changes over the course of migration. The sample in China is more homogeneous in terms of occupation but also gender, which has to do with the recruitment method of snowball sampling. Participants interviewed in China are older and more advanced in their careers and family lives, which is natural as they had to have spent time in Japan, Japan’s immigration policies support student migration (younger people enter Japan and return when they have entered a new career- and/or family-related life phase), and married persons (especially with children) exhibit lower levels of mobility.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

The study relies mainly on empirical data that were collected in three fieldwork periods in 2011–12 in metropolitan regions of Japan and China. Semi-structured interviews form the empirical basis of the study, added by quantifiable data from network questionnaires distributed to the same participants. The study analyzes decision-making processes of highly skilled Chinese migrants to Japan about whether to settle or return, and the timing of this decision. It maps the influence of various factors over the life course and analyzes gender differences. Yet, due to the limited time frame of data collection, the study cannot rely on longitudinal data. As an alternative to a longitudinal approach, the study analyzes data from different agents in various life phases and stages in the decision-making process to identify factors influential and decisive in locational decisions. The sample was

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter 4 for a detailed account of the composition of the Chinese population in Japan.

¹⁵⁵ Following the ranking explained in footnote 126, 67% of students attended excellent (ranks 1–3), 21% top-level, 5% prestigious (rank 6) and 8% upper-middle level universities (rank 7).

¹⁵⁶ Another function of “maximum variation” (even if the sampling did not allow for “extreme” cases) is that across cases patterns can be verified or modified (Miles and Huberman 1994: 28).

purposely chosen from a wide range of occupations, age groups and lengths of stay, yet it cannot be excluded that cohort differences affect the results more than the hypothesized differences in life phase. There are some factors that suggest that a cohort effect probably does *not* bias results of the study. Despite the many revisions of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (Fuess 2003: 245; Sellek 2001: 25), policy towards students and skilled workers did not change so much as to define different cohorts as a result of policy. Japan's economy has been in crisis since the 1990s, therefore the participants can also not be divided by cohorts in terms of Japan's economic development. One aspect that could cause a cohort effect, though, is the development of the Chinese economy: students coming to Japan in the late 2000s grew up in increasing affluence as compared to students in the early 1990s and those two groups may perceive their chances in China differently. Experiences in Japan differ by financial affluence especially during university when most students work part-time to finance their studies.¹⁵⁷ A look at part-time activities to finance studies might provide clarity as to whether this could suggest a cohort effect: of the sample, about a fifth is without *baito*¹⁵⁸ experience. A close look reveals that the share of those without *baito* experience lies around 20% among those entering before *and* after the year of 2000. This similarity in both groups suggests that the economic development in China is not enough to suggest a cohort effect among Chinese students in Japan.

A comparatively large sample of 112 agents was chosen that followed a similar trajectory of pursuing an education at the beginning of their migration experience in Japan. This similarity in trajectories with a purposeful choice of a variety of occupations justifies the use of the sample for tracing the influence of factors from the spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences. Yet, the lack of longitudinal data still presents a limitation, as the study only reflects agents' attitudes and intentions, but cannot measure actual behavior; agents may change their location despite having reported to have "settled." In order to ease this effect that may disprove the findings of this study, returnees to China have been included in the sample to differentiate between factors that agents anticipate to be influential and decisive in return or settlement decisions and those that actually mattered. Yet, even these returnees may rethink their locational decisions in the future.¹⁵⁹ This does not present a threat to the validity of the findings of this study, as it focuses on developing a model of decision-making processes, not predicting the final decision. For this aspect, attitudes and intentions of agents considering themselves settled or mobile are sufficient to trace differences between these groups. If they diverge from their stated intention, the decision-making cycle resumes.

¹⁵⁷ See Liu-Farrer (2011: 63–84) on Chinese students' experiences of part-time work next to university education over time.

¹⁵⁸ The Japanese term *baito* comes from the German word "Arbeit" and designates part-time activities.

¹⁵⁹ As Dumont and Spielvogel (2007: 184) put it: "Returning home does not necessarily mean the end of the migration pathway, and it is not always final."

Another limitation of the study lies in incomplete answers of some participants. 9 out of 112 participants refused to be recorded, 47 submitted incomplete forms but allowed the use of the interview data; 13 of those 47 participants refused to give any written data consisting of face sheet, questionnaire on network composition and on network use. Face sheet information could be obtained for all of the 112 informants, although it remains incomplete in 13 cases for the question of whether agents had entered a foreigners' (student, occupational or volunteering) association during their time in Japan. Data on network size, composition and use could be obtained for all 112 participants. Detailed information on the closest contacts in Japan and China is missing in 47 cases. Information on network use could be imputed through information given in the interviews in three cases, resulting in a total of 68 filled out forms on network use and 44 missing. In China, the response rate for this part of the questionnaire is comparatively low at 30%, while it stands at 80% in Japan.¹⁶⁰ As the questionnaire is used to trace differences in levels of integration by time spent in Japan, the response rate for Japan is most important. Hence, the relatively lower response rate in China is not critical, as the gained data can still serve as comparison to the answers from Japan while mostly focusing on the data gained from Japan. If data were missing, cases would be excluded pairwise, meaning that the case is not included for the specific question analyzed but included for others.

Lipshitz and Pras (2005: 104) and Hollnagel (2007: 5) point out that decisions do not follow a set course of phases but that agents skip or repeat them; only in retrospect are they identified as distinct decisions. The model accounts for these inconsistencies in the process, yet the problem of agents relying on their memory in recounting the decision-making process remains and, in fact, exists in all ex post facto research. Relying on memory can be problematic, yet recent publications on retrospective data (specifically on life course trajectories) have shown that the reliability of this type of data is high if it concerns issues that are of high emotional intensity, of central importance for the life course or had a strong financial or social impact (Höpflinger 2010; Klein and Fischer-Kerli 2000), which is true for return and settlement decisions of the participants in this study. This issue is even less important for the participants interviewed in Japan as most are still in the process of locational decision-making. Agents interviewed in China may have fit the narrative of how they arrived at their locational decision to their current circumstances or what they see as the socially "correct" answer. However, the interviewer questioned specific narratives by asking the participant to also elaborate on other aspects. Agents' assessment of their decision forms part of their current locational decision-making process and therefore provides information on the feedback loop.

¹⁶⁰ The 44 participants who have not filled out the form on network use cited a lack of time (38 of them are workers, 6 students), expressed not to want to think back on this issue or unwillingness to do so (30 were interviewed in China, 14 in Japan).

Additionally, the focus of the empirical data on the various factors influencing migration decisions cuts short the reports of participants on the actual *process* of decision making, limiting the accuracy of depictions of the decision-making stages and their specific length. Standard in decision-making research are think-aloud protocols to trace problem-solving processes of agents. Yet, locational decision-making is a complex and drawn-out process, for which think-aloud protocols are not an appropriate method. Therefore, the choice of agents' depictions of the process is justifiable to trace the decision-making process. The resulting model includes findings from the literature to supplement the empirical data.

4 Chinese Migration to Japan

This chapter provides the context for the decisions of highly skilled Chinese to return to China. After sketching the history of Chinese migration to Japan,¹⁶¹ it zooms in on Japan's immigration policy shaping the legal framework of highly skilled migration. In the following section, the composition of the Chinese population is sketched in terms of visa category, age, sex and occupation. The chapter resumes with the PRC's policy initiatives to attract highly skilled (back) to China and the scale of return migration of overseas Chinese.

4.1 History of Chinese Migration to Japan

Gavan McCormack (2001: 1) begins the introduction to a volume entitled "Multicultural Japan" (Denoon *et al.*) with a statement found in many publications on Japan: "Japan is conventionally seen as a monocultural society."¹⁶² However, as McCormack also points out in the following pages of his chapter, this description of Japan as a *tan'itsu minzoku kokka* (mono-ethnic nation) is a myth. In fact, migration is hypothesized to lie at the very origin of the Japanese population,¹⁶³ and exchanges between Japan and China go back at least to the Han

¹⁶¹ Chinese make up the largest group of non-Japanese in Japan and enter with various types of visa (MOJ 2016; MIC 2016b). Yet, the group has not attracted much attention in Western language research. Notable exceptions are the works of Gracia Liu-Farrer and Hélène Le Bail on Chinese migrants of various skill levels and Daniel Kremers' work on trainees.

¹⁶² McCormack (2001: 1) begins with this "plausible proposition" and briefly explains the origins and development of this belief, only to then provide evidence to prove "that Japan has long been 'multicultural,' and what is distinctive is the success with which that diversity has been cloaked by the ideology of 'uniqueness' and 'monoculturalism'" (McCormack 2001: 3). Other publications (among others Lie 2001: 1; Tsuda, Valdez and Cornelius 2003: 226) address this myth of Japan as a "mono-ethnic," "monoracial" or "homogeneous" society (McCormack 2001: 1), or an "ethnic nation" (Triandafyllidou 2001: 81). In his review of *Nihonjinron* (publications about the essence of Japanese culture and people), Befu Harumi (2001: 68–72) explains that one of the major premises of *Nihonjinron* writers' claims of Japan's uniqueness centers around cultural homogeneity (*tōshitsu/dōshitsu*). Homogeneity refers to the ethnic composition of the Japanese people, but also language, religion and lifestyle. As Befu (2001: 69) states: "racial and ethnic homogeneity in Japan is not an objective fact, it is instead a construct of those who are motivated to promote a certain cultural conception of Japan." Migration scholars have argued that this belief has become the foundation of Japan's restrictive immigration policy (see Chiavacci 2011: 33).

¹⁶³ Early settlers came from "somewhere in the South-east Asian or South China region" (McCormack 2001: 4) and later waves of immigrants from Northeast Asia (Pohl 2008: 7–8). Japanese of today are

Dynasty;¹⁶⁴ they consisted of intellectual exchanges but also important trade relations that were sustained even in times of conflict. Migration to Japan has happened at least since the 6th and 7th century when more Koreans and Chinese came to Japan,¹⁶⁵ while Portuguese entered Japan (Tanegashima) as early as 1542/1543, to be followed by Portuguese trading ships that also brought missionaries to Japan (Pohl 2008: 46).¹⁶⁶ After the Portuguese, also the Spanish, Dutch and British engaged in trade with Japan (Dettmer 1992: XI).¹⁶⁷ Japan had entered a period of isolation (*sakoku*) from 1639, yet Chinese merchants continued to be active in Nagasaki (Liu-Farrer 2011: 19; Uchida 1949; Vasishth 1997: 116–117).

Especially after Japan's opening in the 19th century, the colonization and annexation of Taiwan and Korea, respectively, there were increased population exchanges with these territories. Chinese entered Japan as merchants, artisans and other skilled workers, but many worked in restaurants, barber shops and tailoring (Liu-Farrer 2011: 19).¹⁶⁸ Most new entrants in the late 19th century were

therefore of mixed origin, with inner Asian and Indonesian-Polynesian roots (Dettmer 1992: 1, see also Befu (2001: 39–44) for a discussion of the origin of the Japanese people and language).

¹⁶⁴ Christopher Howe (1996: 4) states that “parts of Japan had some form of tributary status in China as early as the Han dynasty” (206 BC to AD 219), because archaeological findings suggest “that the Han had conferred vassal status on a Japanese chieftain” (Huang 1997: 58). Kai Vogelsang (2012: 199) explains that Japan was first mentioned in the Records of the Three Kingdoms (*Sanguo Zhi*), because Himiko of Yamatai sent four missions between AD 239 and 247 to Wei (during the Chinese period of the Three Kingdoms). Ronald E. Dolan and Robert I. Worden (1994) date the earliest mentioning of Japan to the year AD 57. Yet, Manfred Pohl (2008: 8–9) even refers to Chinese sources of 200 BC and AD 200 mentioning “Japan;” Japanese missions to China brought back elements of Chinese civilization, most importantly, the Chinese writing system.

¹⁶⁵ Knowledge, for example, about rice cultivation or specific tools, entered Japan from China through the “cultural bridge” of Korea as early as the Yayoi period (300 BC to AD 300). Cultural exchanges with China and Korea intensified in the 6th century, as Korean scholars and craftsmen brought construction techniques, Buddhist writings or medical knowledge to Japan (Pohl 2008: 10–13).

¹⁶⁶ The Jesuit Francis Xavier is credited with being the first Christian missionary to arrive in Japan (in 1549) and introducing Catholic Christianity from his base in Kagoshima. Padre Cosme de Torres and Irmão Juan Fernández, Anjirō and three servants also joined his mission (Higashibaba 2001: 1). The Jesuits (sponsored by Portugal) became the most numerous and influential group in Japan despite the presence of Franciscans (in Japan since 1593), Dominicans and Augustinians (in Japan since 1602) from the Spanish Philippines (Higashibaba 2001: 136).

¹⁶⁷ Trade relations with China continued even during internal turmoil; between 1432 and 1549, eleven trading expeditions were sent from Japan to China, seeking to sell swords, copper ore etc., while importing copper coins, silks, porcelain and books from China (Pohl 2008: 34). Andrea Vasishth (1997: 115) even speaks of 17 missions between Ming China and Japan from 1404 and 1549. Ming China had banned trade with Japan in 1547, yet these restrictions could not be enforced at sea and trade continued also during *sakoku*.

¹⁶⁸ In the 19th century, emigration from China increased rapidly as a result of, as Vasishth (1997: 109) puts it, “the encounter with European imperialism” (Opium Wars), “China’s increased incorporation within the world capitalist system” (trade relations opened up but also shut down again business opportunities, for example, European consumers increasingly drank Indian rather than Chinese tea, influencing demand, production and employment), and “internal changes within China” (Taiping Rebellion). However, Chinese were not legally allowed to reside in Japan until the Sino-Japanese treaty

unaccompanied males from the coastal regions of China (Vasishth 1997: 119). After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), the number of Chinese in Japan fell from 5,343 in 1893 to 1,576 in 1894, yet quickly bounced back to more than 5,000 by 1897 already. In 1899, an Imperial Ordinance restricted the permitted locations of Chinese employment (of general laborers) to foreign concessions, reducing Chinese labor migration to Japan and altering the composition of Chinese residents to mainly skilled laborers, artisans and merchants in Chinatowns (Liu-Farrer 2011: 19; 2009b: 117; Vasishth 1997: 124; Yamawaki 2000: 39–42). In the early 20th century, Chinese formed the largest foreign community in Japan (Liu-Farrer 2009b: 116). Student migration increased since its beginnings in 1896, yet after the 1911 revolution in China (*Xinhai Geming*) the number of students but also of merchants dropped as many returned (Vasishth 1997: 128). The number of laborers increased again due to recruitment to alleviate a labor shortage in Japan since 1917, yet by 1922, there was no further demand, unemployment among the Chinese rose and new entrants were refused. After the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 (*Kantō daishinsai*), the number of Chinese in Japan decreased dramatically, as one-third of the Chinese in the Tokyo area were killed (largely in the days after the earthquake by Japanese) or fled to China (Vasishth 1997: 128–129). Although merchants rebuilt their businesses in Yokohama Chinatown, the number of Chinese diminished again greatly after the Manchurian Incident of 1931, when almost all of Chinese students and about half of the merchants returned to China (Vasishth 1997: 129). Forced labor was brought in from Manchuria and other regions of North China from 1942 onward;¹⁶⁹ just between April 1943 and May 1945, a number of Chinese between 38,935 (Liu-Farrer 2009b: 118) and 42,000 came to Japan as forced laborers, about 31,000 survived (Vasishth 1997: 131). The poor treatment of these forced laborers and "Japanese governments' evasive attitudes toward their compensation" continually trouble Chinese–Japanese relations (Liu-Farrer 2009b: 118). After 1945, most laborers were repatriated; however, returning to China in this time was difficult as it was in the midst of a civil war, which led about half of the Taiwanese in Japan to remain there (Vasishth 1997: 129–131).¹⁷⁰

In 1952, Koreans and Taiwanese residing in Japan were stripped of their Japanese nationality and instead considered foreigners, excluding them, for example, from the right to social benefits and the opportunity to work in the public

of 1871, yet they entered as employees or dependants of Western merchants, and, already in the late 1870s, in large numbers as seamen passing through Japanese ports (Vasishth 1997: 118–119).

¹⁶⁹ Students from Manchuria continued to come to Japan, while the Nationalist government stopped sending students after the Incident (Liu-Farrer 2011: 23; Wang 2006). Workers were mostly taken from villages or from prisoners of war to fulfill labor quotas; they were not given sufficient nutrition, housed in poor living conditions in camps and endured severe physical hardship, resulting in a death rate of over 50% in some camps (Vasishth 1997: 131).

¹⁷⁰ The presence of 14,000 Taiwanese raised the number of Chinese residents in Japan to 34,000 (Uchida 1949, cited in Vasishth 1997: 131).

sector.¹⁷¹ During much of the post-war period, despite the rise of the Japanese economy (after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics with a brief slow-down during the oil crises of the 1970s), Japan did not import much foreign labor but filled the demand of the labor market with returnees, rural migrants and female workers.¹⁷² Jeannette Behaghel and Vogt (2006: 115) find that since the 1970s, Japan has to be considered a destination for labor migration.¹⁷³ Komai (2001: 16–17) divides these workers into four groups: foreign women entering under the visa category of entertainer,¹⁷⁴ Indochinese refugees, repatriation of second- or third-generation Japanese from China, and business people. Yet despite the fact that various forms of labor migration to Japan had become a reality, Takeyuki Tsuda and Wayne A. Cornelius (2004: 449–450) identify the following main principles in Japan’s immigration policy: only highly skilled foreign workers should enter while unskilled should not be admitted, and all foreigners are only allowed to stay for a limited amount of time. However, “side doors” are open to foreigners of lower skills (Kajita 1995: 11); these include the facilitated entry of *Nikkeijin*, descendants of Japanese mainly from Brazil,¹⁷⁵ and the trainee program, officially a program for skill transfer and development assistance, which attracts mainly low-skilled Chinese workers.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ See Komai Hiroshi (2001: 14–15) on the consequences of this step for rights of Koreans in Japan.

¹⁷² The Japanese labor market could rely on rural migrants until the 1970s and from then on also on women working part-time (Douglass and Roberts 2000: 6–7; Lie 2001: 8–10).

¹⁷³ In the 1980s the national pool for low-wage workers became insufficient to meet the demands of Japan’s economy, and foreign workers had to be brought in (Douglass and Roberts 2000: 6–7; Lie 2001: 10). In this period of high economic growth, many labor migrants worked in 3K-jobs: jobs were *kitanai* (dirty), *kiken* (dangerous) and *kitsui* (demeaning). Additionally, they were characterized by another 3K: *kyūryō ga yasui* (bad pay), *kyūka wa sukunai* (little vacation) and *kakkō ga warui* (bad image). Also, the number of irregular migrants rose during that time period, mostly because foreign workers overstayed their visas (Douglass and Roberts 2000: 7; Karan 2005: 192; Vogt 2015: 569).

¹⁷⁴ This visa allows them to work in the theater, music or other show businesses, although many worked in the sex industry.

¹⁷⁵ As David Chiavacci (2011: 33) explains in his literature review of ethnic nationalism and immigration policy in Japan, many scholars view the immigration policy for *Nikkeijin*, who receive special treatment in the sense that they are allowed to work in any occupation upon “re”-entry to Japan, as the perfect example of an underlying belief in Japan’s immigration policy, namely the conviction of Japan’s ethnic homogeneity.

¹⁷⁶ While there is no definition for low-skilled workers, *tanjun rōdō* refers to occupations, in which no special skills, knowledge or technology are required (Behaghel and Vogt 2006: 125). Other entrance routes for lesser skilled migrants are tourist visas, which the workers then overstay.

Nikkeijin coming to Japan often work in low-skilled jobs, although they may have better training or higher educational levels in their “home countries.” Their Japanese descent is thought to prevent integration problems, yet due to their cultural (often South American) background, they face problems with social customs in Japan (Brody 2002: 2–3; Karan 2005: 191; Tsuda 2009: 208–210).

Trainees are mainly employed in small and medium enterprises (SME). Companies only rarely invest in the education and skill development of their foreign trainees, but instead use them as unskilled workers (Liu-Farrer 2009a: 180; Shipper 2002: 45). The program has not only been criticized in Japan by labor unions and civil society organizations (Kremers 2011: 18–21), but also attracted international criticism, for example in the 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report by the U.S. Department of State.

However, after the PRC was founded in 1949 and throughout the reign of Mao Zedong few Chinese were allowed to leave the country. Only with the economic reforms and the opening of China under Deng Xiaoping (and the accompanying shift towards a welcoming attitude towards overseas Chinese) did the number of Chinese moving abroad and especially to Japan increase. After the Tiananmen Square Protests in 1989¹⁷⁷ it became harder for Chinese citizens to emigrate to Western Countries due to political restrictions, yet Japan quickly reopened its borders to Chinese to help its booming economy.¹⁷⁸ Even when the bubble economy in Japan collapsed shortly after,¹⁷⁹ the number of Chinese coming to Japan continued to rise, many of them students. As has been pointed out, student migration between Japan and China go back many years. In the beginnings of the centuries-long exchange between Japan and China, it was mainly Japanese who went to China to study. The *official* beginnings of student migration from China to Japan can only be dated back to 1896:¹⁸⁰ after China had lost to Japan in the Sino-Japanese war, there was a wish to learn from Japan's rapid modernization (Huang 1982: 1–10; Liu-Farrer 2011: 21). Numbers of students entering Japan until 1945 fluctuated,¹⁸¹ in those early years, some were government-sponsored,

According to Torii Ippei of the *Zentōitsu Rōdō Kumiai* (Zentōitsu Workers Union), Chinese, despite making up the majority of trainees and technical interns in Japan, are hesitant to use the support of workers' unions (interview with the author, Tokyo, 2011/01/19).

¹⁷⁷ In April 1989, student-led protests occurred in Beijing, triggered by the death of Hu Yaobang, former Secretary General of the Communist Party of China, who had had to resign in 1987 after proposing liberal policies. Protesters convened on Tiananmen Square to commemorate his death, but also to demand democratic reforms (Cremerius, Fischer and Schier 1991: 16–17; Vogelsang 2012: 595). On June 3rd and 4th, the protesters were forcefully removed from Tiananmen Square, leading to the dubbing of the event as the “Tiananmen Massacre” (yet the number of people killed remains contested). See Ruth Cremerius, Doris Fischer and Peter Schier (1991) for background information and a chronology of events.

¹⁷⁸ The educational background and objectives of many migrants in the high-growth era differ from most migrants today and strongly from those interviewed for this study. In Japan's boom years, a relatively short stay in Japan to make money to take home to China was very attractive to workers regardless of their educational background (Liu-Farrer (2011: 89) cites the example of a Chinese college professor whose monthly income in China could pay for a bowl of noodles in Japan in the 1980s). Today, China's economic boom has made the country attractive for labor migration as well, as the pay gap for executives (target group of this study) is narrowing between Tokyo and Shanghai or Beijing, and purchasing power for this group is therefore rising in China (Rapoza 2013/03/14); according to the 2011 Cost of Living Survey of ECA International (2012), Tokyo ranks first as the most expensive location worldwide for international assignees, while Beijing and Shanghai are in 7th and 8th place in Asia and 35th and 41st globally. Between 2011 and 2012, Beijing and Shanghai climbed 13 and 15 places in the global ranking, respectively.

¹⁷⁹ The term *buburu keiki* (bubble economy) refers to the years from 1985 (after the Plaza Accord) to 1990, during which real estate and stock market prices were highly inflated and interest rates low. After the economic bubble burst, Japan entered the lost decade (yet, Japan has been facing more than 20 years of economic stagnation; so there have been at least two lost decades).

¹⁸⁰ The first group of students only consisted of 13 persons, but expanded to more than 8,000 in 1905–06 (Huang 1982: 1; Liu-Farrer 2011: 18; Sanetō 1960; Vasisht (1997: 126) even speaks of estimations up to 20,000).

¹⁸¹ See Vasisht (1997) for the historical development of the Chinese population in Japan.

but most were self-financed (Liu-Farrer 2011: 20). After the end of the Second World War in 1945 and the proclamation of the PRC in 1949, the volume of student migration greatly diminished, coming to a halt during the Cultural Revolution. It only picked up again after the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1972 and increased in numbers after Deng Xiaoping adopted the “open door policy,” sent students to Japan and relaxed travel laws.¹⁸² In these beginnings, students were selected by the Chinese government (Achenbach 2015: 43; Cheng 2003: 159; Liu-Farrer 2009a: 184). In 1979, Japan and China started educational exchange programs, with China in 1984 finally opening the door for self-financed students through a number of policies (Liu-Farrer 2009a: 184; 2009b: 119; Wang 2006). Japan was attractive as a destination for a number of reasons. On the one hand, Chinese educational institutions had suffered during the Cultural Revolution and only few spaces were available for students.¹⁸³ The situation was especially difficult for post-graduate education, which is one reason for the exodus of students abroad especially in the 1990s (Liu-Farrer 2009b: 119–120). The two universities of Japan most famous in China are (private) Waseda University and the (public) University of Tokyo. One reason for Waseda University’s fame is that it has hosted numerous Chinese politicians and scholars as foreign students since 1899 (17 years after its founding).¹⁸⁴ Tokyo University, which is the highest ranking Japanese university in international rankings (CWCU 2014; Quacquarelli Symonds 2013; Times Higher Education 2014), is a popular destination for Chinese students both for its reputation but also because the tuition is lower than at Waseda University. For Chinese students contemplating a stay in Japan, those two are usually the targets¹⁸⁵ or at least the standard to which other universities are compared.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² From 1984, students were allowed to go abroad if they had secured the necessary financial means (Liu-Farrer 2009a: 184; 2009b: 119).

¹⁸³ Only in 1977 did entrance examinations for higher education resume (Liu-Farrer 2009b: 120).

¹⁸⁴ Liao Zhongkai, Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu and Peng Pai studied at Waseda University, whom Hu Jintao named individuals “who had a major impact on China’s modern history” (China Embassy 2008/07/20).

¹⁸⁵ This is in line with Times Higher Education Rankings editor Phil Baty’s justification for using universities’ reputations as main indicator in QS scores: “[...] a university’s reputation is the No. 1 consideration for overseas students – above fees and even course content” (cited in Guttenplan 2013/04/12). However, as Liu-Farrer (2009a: 190–196) points out, for lack of time due to tight job schedules to finance their studies while preparing for entrance examinations, many Chinese students settle for less prestigious universities or majors in the humanities, which still offer good career tracks in the sales or marketing divisions of Japanese companies.

¹⁸⁶ This is a statement made by many of the students interviewed for this study when asked about how they chose the universities to which they applied.

4.2 Japan's Immigration Policy

Japan's immigration reality is characterized by a gap between official policy and its outcome. While official rhetoric emphasizes that only highly skilled are allowed to enter the country as labor migrants and that permanent settlement is not permitted,¹⁸⁷ non-Japanese of various skill levels are active in Japan's labor market and 48% of registered non-Japanese were (special) permanent residency visa holders in 2015 (MOJ 2016; Vogt and Achenbach 2012: 15).¹⁸⁸ In addition, specific visas come with the option of long-term residence, thereby undermining this official rhetoric, as Komine (2014) argues.¹⁸⁹

Vogt (2015: 579) hypothesizes that the gap between official rhetoric and the reality of skill levels of foreign workers in Japan is, in fact, intentional. Japan's debates about immigration have been divided into a first one that focused on labor shortages in the 1980s and a second one around 2000 about population shrinking due to demographic change, which differ strongly in the climate of their discussion: the second one was held with a sense of crisis, while the former one was more practically oriented (Iguchi 2001; Thränhardt 2012: 184; Vogt 2013:

¹⁸⁷ This only temporary basis for the stay of highly skilled workers is adopted by a number of countries, as Robyn Iredale, Fei Guo and Santi Rozario (2003: 7) point out, "supposedly to meet skills shortages until they can train their own stock of skilled workers." Castles (2003: 5) even claims that these types of policies are often seen in all of Asia and that the highly skilled foreigners circulating between different countries "are not perceived as migrants at all."

¹⁸⁸ Iguchi Yasushi (2001: 18) explains that official rhetoric distinguishes sharply between highly skilled and low-skilled workers. The latter include migrants who entered Japan on entertainer or trainee visas (Morita and Sassen 1994: 153; Vogt and Achenbach 2012: 15). Despite official rhetoric, Chivavacci (2012: 28) claims that 80% of "foreign workers in Japan work in jobs that the ICRRRA [Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act] defines as low-skilled." Japan can therefore be considered structurally dependent on these workers (see also Castles 2003: 21).

In 2011 (when fieldwork was conducted for this study in Japan) 47.5% of registered foreigners held (special) permanent residence visas (MOJ 2012a), while in 2015, (special) permanent residents made up the largest group of registered non-Japanese in the country with 48% (16.3% and 31.7% respectively). Long-term residents (*teijūsha*) account for another 7.4%. Family-based visa holders are another large group with 13.7% (spouse or child of Japanese national/permanent resident 6.5%/1.3%, dependent 5.9%, MOJ 2016).

Permanent residents, spouses/children of Japanese nationals/permanent residents and long-term residents all face no restrictions when it comes to the work they are allowed to perform, while most "working" visas only allow for the designated activities (diplomatic, official, professor, artist, religious activities, journalist, investor/business manager, legal/accounting services, medical services, researcher, instructor, engineer, specialist in humanities/international services, intracompany transferee, entertainer, skilled labor, technical intern). The visas for cultural activities, temporary visitor, college student and trainee do not officially allow for work (although students are allowed to work to finance their studies and trainees work in the company in which they receive training). Since 1991 the category of special permanent resident includes those who held Japanese nationality until 1947 as well as their descendants (Brandes *et al.* 2004: 238).

¹⁸⁹ Komine (2014) refers specifically to *Nikkeijin* and highly skilled migrants. The latter are targeted by a point-based system that was implemented in May 2012, which includes relaxed provisions for permanent residency that can be granted after five years (instead of ten years).

23).¹⁹⁰ Labor migration to Japan is based on the Immigration Ordinance (*Shutsunyūkoku kanri rei*) of 1951 and the subsequent Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRA, *Shutsunyūkoku kanri oyobi nanmin nintei-hō*) which has since been revised many times (Fuess 2003: 245; Sellek 2001: 25).¹⁹¹ A number of players are involved in migration policy making: the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Japanese Business Federation (*Nippon Keidanren*), and, in some cases such as care migration via Economic Partnership Agreements, the representatives from migrants' countries of origin.¹⁹² Their interests and ideas about what constitutes good policy differ greatly in terms of allowed length of stay or skill level (Komine 2014; Shipper 2002; Tsukasaki 2008: 237–239; Vogt 2007: 15). Outcomes are dealt with mainly on a local level by local governments or civil society organizations (Vogt 2013; 2011).

With the revision of the ICRRA in 1989 and its implementation in 1990, backdoors, or rather “side doors” where opened to fill the demand in low-skilled occupations with trainees and *Nikkeijin* (Castles 2000: 100–101; Kajita 1998: 120–121; Sellek 2001: 63; Thränhardt 1999; Tsuda 2009: 207). Students also work in low-paid and low-skilled occupations during their studies, only to enter the highly skilled labor market after graduation, thereby serving as a “bridge” between the different skill spectrums (Liu-Farrer 2009a: 178; Vogt and Achenbach 2012: 15; see also Tsuda and Cornelius 2004: 452–457).¹⁹³ As part of the 1989 revision of the ICRRA it became easier for skilled foreigners to enter Japan (Fuess 2003: 244). Visas that are given out to the highly skilled (with the exception of students) include: professor, journalists legal/accounting services, researcher, engineer, artist, investor/business manager, medical services, instructor, specialist in humanities/international services, skilled labor and intra-company transferee (e-gov 2014; Fuess 2003: 255).

¹⁹⁰ Chiavacci (2011: 13–17) points out that despite a rather continuous inflow of migrants to Japan, the Japanese immigration debates were highly fragmented, as was Japan's economic development; despite the “two lost decades” of economic stagnation, the number of registered foreigners rose.

¹⁹¹ Yoko Sellek (2001) argues that three revisions were of particular importance: in 1952, when Koreans and Chinese could obtain residency, in 1982 when “the government recast the law as the ICRRA” (Fuess 2003: 245) and visa categories were specified to allow for the entry of professionals, and the 1989 Revision that took effect in 1990.

¹⁹² Other actors include the National Police Agency, Chambers of Commerce or the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (Weiner 1998: 24–25). Shipper (2002: 41–42) argues that the different actors associate “specific races with specific kinds of labor,” leading to lower levels of support and higher tolerance for unfair and even illegal treatment by employers of, e.g., South Asians.

¹⁹³ Students accounted for 11% of registered non-Japanese in 2015 (MIC 2016b).

Around the year 2000, various bodies (Economic Planning Agency, Ministry of Labour¹⁹⁴) pushed for further immigration of highly skilled, especially with an eye on increasing the number of IT workers, leading to a relaxation of application criteria for various highly skilled visa categories (Komine 2014: 210–211; MOJ 2007; 2003).¹⁹⁵ The understanding of the necessity to “welcome” highly skilled to Japan grew further in the 2000s (CAGI 2007: 44; Komine 2014: 214), and was put into policy by the introduction of a point-based visa system for highly skilled in 2012.¹⁹⁶ The new visa categories of highly skilled, their families and staff are excluded in this study, as no participants entered Japan under this new visa policy.

Raising the inflow of foreign students has been on the agenda for far longer than the immigration of highly skilled: in 1984 the Plan to Accept 100,000 International Students (*Ryūgakusei ukeire 10man nin Keikaku*) was adopted under the government of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro. It formed part of Nakasone’s internationalization agenda and was intended for the temporary stay of foreign students who would facilitate “Japan’s economic and political outreach” (Chiavacci 2012: 32; see also Duan 2003: 75).¹⁹⁷ Visa application procedures were simplified, and as there were no language requirements to obtain a visa, a large number of language schools opened. These schools provided the official documents for the legal entry of pre-college students, essentially low-skilled workers, and profited from their school fees (Chiavacci 2012: 33; Liu-Farrer 2009a: 186; Sellek 2001: 88).¹⁹⁸ Especially migrants who entered Japan as “language students” on *shūgaku* visas were often economically motivated, as were many Chinese students from Fujian (Liu-Farrer 2009a: 187). To end the abuse of

¹⁹⁴ In 2001, in the course of Central Government Reform, the Ministry of Labour merged with the Ministry of Health and Welfare to form the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

¹⁹⁵ This is exemplified by the Second Basic Plan for Immigration Control (*Dai 2ji shutsunyūkoku kanri kihon Keikaku*) of the MOJ (2000).

¹⁹⁶ This idea was first published by the Council for the Promotion of the Admission of High-Level Human Resources (*Kōdō jinzai ukeire suishin kaigi*) and filtered through into the Fourth Basic Plan for Immigration Control (*Dai 4ji shutsunyūkoku kanri kihon Keikaku*) (CAHHR 2009; Komine 2014: 214; MOJ 2010). Japan is competing with other nations in the quest to increase its number of highly skilled workers within its borders; as Marc Rosenblum (2001: 384) argues, “access to skilled labor is the primary limiting factor that will define the geography and long-term distributive effects of the information revolution.” This argumentation is based on New Growth Theory, which states: “Knowledge workers are the modern source of economic growth and development” (Iredale, Guo and Rozario 2003: 6).

¹⁹⁷ In 1974 the number of newly entering foreign students (*ryūgakusei*) stood at less than 2000 in Japan (while those residing in Japan added up to 5712, Asano 2007: 40), but that number quickly rose after Nakasone started the 100,000 students plan and the Ministry of Justice in 1983 relaxed the restrictions on hours students could work (Asano 2007: 40).

¹⁹⁸ Students could enter with two types of visa: *shūgakusei* or *ryūgakusei*. *Ryūgakusei* attend universities, graduate schools or *senmon gakkō*, while the *shūgakusei* visa was for students of high schools, Japanese language schools, *senmon gakkō*, or vocational schools (Asano 2007: 40). Officially coming to learn were also trainees (*kenshūsei* and *ginō jisshūsei*), yet this study focuses only on highly skilled migration, thereby excluding visa holders of those categories. Since 2010 the visa category of *shūgakusei* has been integrated into the *ryūgakusei* visa.

these visas, “ghost schools” were shut down and in order to raise the number of students with sincere ambitions, the regulations about weekly working hours for student workers to finance their studies were revised and increased. Most foreign students come from Asian countries and are self-financed (Asano 2007: 41; JASSO 2012; Suhara 1996: 39), therefore many foreign students work part-time (in the low-wage sector) to finance their studies (Li 2004; Liu-Farrer 2009a: 189; Sellek 2001: 85).¹⁹⁹ This experience, as Liu-Farrer (2011; 2009a) argues, provides them with skills beneficial to their future careers in corporate Japan. “Educationally channeled international labor mobility” (Liu-Farrer 2009a) continues to be one of the main policies adopted by Japanese governments to bring foreign workers to Japan, who are culturally and linguistically well-trained by the time they enter Japan’s labor market.²⁰⁰ About two thirds of foreign students remained in Japan after graduation in 2011, while 31.4% returned to their home countries and only 1.7% moved on to other destinations (JASSO 2013). Nakasone’s plan of raising the number to 100,000 students met its target in 2000, and Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo on January 18, 2008, announced a new plan targeting the number of 300,000 foreign students in Japan by the year of 2020 (*Ryūgakusei 30man nin Keikaku*) (Kantei 2008; MOFA 2008). In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT 2009) adopted the “Global 30” Initiative, which consists of 13 universities that facilitate the application process, provide special support and even offer programs in English to increase the number of foreign students.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Asano (2007: 41) explains that Asian students in Japan have three characteristics: they are comparatively poor and therefore dependent on scholarships and part-time work, a large percentage does not attend university but language schools or *senmon gakkō*, and many only stay for a short term. Students come on either Japanese scholarships (for example, scholarships of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, MEXT) or government scholarships from their home countries, but most are self-financed (Asano 2007: 41; Suhara 1996: 39). Once they enter university programs, more than half (51.4%) get scholarships (JASSO 2012; Liu-Farrer 2009a: 190). In 2011, 74.2% of all students worked part-time, most of them in the food industry; almost 30% worked the maximum of allowed hours and another 23% between 15 and 20 hours a week (JASSO 2012). Although students start out in unskilled jobs in the low-wage sector, with improving language skills they find more skilled employment through their networks, for example, in translation services (Achenbach 2015: 45).

²⁰⁰ Liu-Farrer (2009a: 178–179) uses the term “educationally channeled international labor mobility” to describe “all individuals who receive education for an extended period of time in a foreign country and participate in the host labor market as paid labor during their school years and after graduation.”

²⁰¹ In December 2014, Veronica L. Taylor summarized that the “results have been mixed,” as international student enrolment stands at 3% (vs. 7% OECD average), which might also be influenced by the events of March 11: since 2010, the number of student visa holders has declined from 201,511 to 178,551 in June 2013 (MOJ 2014). However, by June 2015, numbers have risen again to 226,131 student visa holders (MOJ 2016). The Super Global University Project of Prime Minister Abe expands the plan by providing “Type A” universities that have the potential to be included in the top 100 universities in world rankings with extra funds, and “Type B” universities that receive money (about 40% of the budget of Type A universities) to invest in internationalization programs (e.g. conducting classes in English, hiring international professors etc.). However, critics complain about short-

4.3 Composition of the Chinese Population in Japan

In 2015, the percentage of registered non-Japanese in Japan stood at about 1.7% of the population (MIC 2016a; 2016b; MOJ 2016). Of the roughly 2.17 million foreign nationals, 30.2% held Chinese nationality (MOJ 2016). In the year of 2011, when the author’s fieldwork was conducted in Japan, the numbers were roughly the same: there were about 2.08 million registered foreigners, of which Chinese made up 32.5% (674,879 Chinese nationals) (MOJ 2012a).²⁰² In the skilled visa categories, they most often composed the largest group; in the case of students, they constitute two thirds of Japan’s entire foreign student population (MIC 2012a).²⁰³

Table 4.1: Chinese Skilled Visa Holders in Japan in 2011

	total number	number of Chinese	percentage of Chinese
all visa categories	2,078,508	674,879	32.5
professor (<i>kyōju</i>)	7,859	2,294	29.2
artist (<i>geijutsu</i>)	461	97	21.0
journalist (<i>hōdō</i>)	227	21	9.3
investor/business manager (<i>tōshi/keiei</i>)	11,778	3,974	33.7
legal/accounting services (<i>hōritsu/kaikei gyōmu</i>)	169	6	3.6
medical services (<i>iryō</i>)	322	246	76.4
researcher (<i>kenkyū</i>)	2,103	790	37.6
instructor (<i>kyōiku</i>)	10,106	103	1.0
engineer (<i>gijutsu</i>)	42,634	22,486	52.7
specialist in humanities/international services (<i>jimbun chishiki/kokusai gyōmu</i>)	67,854	34,446	50.8
intra-company transferee (<i>kigyōnai tenkin</i>)	14,636	5,518	37.7
skilled labor (<i>ginō</i>)	31,751	17,657	55.6
students (<i>ryūgaku</i>)	188,605	127,435	67.6

Source: MIC 2012a, table compiled by the author.

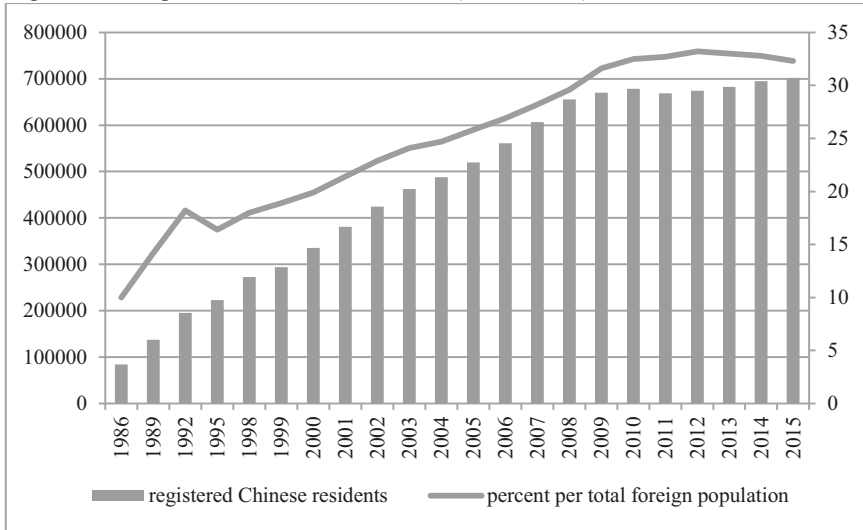
sightedness of the reforms that seek to increase Japan’s economic competitive ability over quality of research and fail to take “culture in universities” into account that are yet unprepared to “accept foreign researchers and staff” (Kakuchi 2014/11/21).

²⁰² From 2012 on, the number of Chinese is divided into nationals from the PRC and the Republic of China (656,403 and 45,209, respectively, in 2015) (MOJ 2016). The number of Chinese from both Chinas has increased between 2012 and 2015, by 3808 for nationals of the PRC but more significantly for nationals of the Republic of China, whose number has almost doubled from 22,775 in 2012.

²⁰³ In the skill-unspecific categories of spousal visas and permanent residents, Chinese made up 23.2 and 30.8% in 2011 (with 59,252 and 184,216 visa holders), respectively (MIC 2012a).

The number of registered Chinese in Japan has increased more than eightfold since 1986 and surpassed the number of Korean residents in 2007, which had made up the majority in foreign residents statistics of the post-war period (MOJ 2014). Once foreign residents take on Japanese nationality, they are no longer counted in foreign resident statistics, therefore the number of ethnic Chinese in Japan is higher than official statistics suggest.²⁰⁴ Irregular residents, such as illegal entrants or visa-overstayers, are not counted in official statistics on registered foreigners.²⁰⁵

Figure 4.1: Registered Chinese Residents (1986–2015)²⁰⁶



Source: MOJ 2008; 2009; 2014; 2015; 2016, figure compiled by the author.

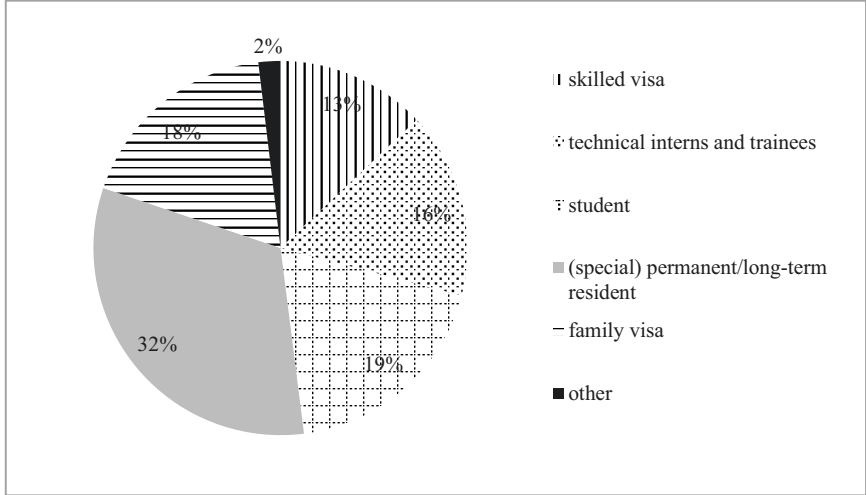
²⁰⁴ *Zainichi* resided in Japan before 1945; some had been brought in as forced laborers. There are about 539,000 Koreans and 53,000 Chinese who have not naturalized and are considered “sociologically Japanese,” because “their language and practices in daily-life activities are Japanese” (Shipper 2002: 44). Between 1996 and 2006, on average 4,600 Chinese naturalized every year (Liu-Farrer 2009b: 123). Tajima Junko (2005) and Liu-Farrer (2009b) both observe a change in the Chinese population in Japan in that the Chinese increasingly show settlement tendencies. However, settling does not equal immigration, as most maintain a transnational lifestyle, Liu-Farrer (2009b: 123) claims, while at the same time, naturalization does not lead to a change of self-identification as Japanese (Wang 2005: 99).

²⁰⁵ The Ministry of Justice records the number of overstayers, which has been declining since its peak (298,646) in 1993. In 2011, the number of overstayers was down to 15,925; Chinese accounted for 4,848 overstayers (MOJ 2012c). Students made up the second largest group among the overstayers in 2005 (Liu-Farrer 2008: 241). The number of illegal entrants is even lower: in 2011, there were only 2,862 illegal entrants, of which 949 (33.2%) were Chinese (MOJ 2012c). Tien-shi Chen (2008: 40, 43) assumes the number of irregular Chinese residents in 2008 to stand at 40,000.

²⁰⁶ As the statistics only in 2010 begin to differentiate between nationals of the PRC and the Republic of China, for Figure 4.1, numbers of nationals of both Chinas are included to illustrate general trends.

In contrast to other foreign populations, the Chinese community is very diverse in terms of visa categories and demographic composition.²⁰⁷ In 2011, women made up 58.5% of the registered Chinese in Japan and only 3.2% of the Chinese population in Japan were older than 65, thereby drastically younger than the Japanese population (MIC 2012b). More than half of registered Chinese reside in Tokyo, where the largest percentage of foreign workers is also registered, of which Chinese form the largest group with 43.3% (MHLW 2012; MIC 2012c). One third (32.2%) resided in Japan on long-term visas (long-term or (special) permanent resident), almost 19% were students,²⁰⁸ roughly 19% held family visas (dependent, spouse or child of Japanese national/permanent resident). More trainee visas (16.1%) were given out to Chinese than highly skilled visas (13%) (MOJ 2012a). The Chinese in Japan therefore form a very heterogeneous group in terms of visa status, skill level and length of stay: there is little contact between newcomer and oldcomer generation (Le Bail 2005; Nyíri 2005: 174).²⁰⁹

Figure 4.2: Composition of Chinese Population in Japan by Visa in 2011



Source: MOJ 2012a, figure compiled by the author.

²⁰⁷ Koreans are concentrated in the visa category of special permanent resident (MIC 2016b).

²⁰⁸ The Chinese student population is evenly composed in terms of gender, while women, who make up the majority of Chinese migrants in Japan, were mainly concentrated in the categories of family visas (Liu-Farrer 2009b: 123).

²⁰⁹ See Tan Romi and Liu Jie (2008) for a detailed analysis of the relationship between oldcomer and newcomer generations in Japan.

The majority of Chinese students major in humanities or social science programs (Liu-Farrer 2009a: 195). 75% of students who changed their student visas to working visas in 2011 were granted a specialist in humanities/international services visa and only 17% an engineering visa.²¹⁰

Tajima (2003: 70) finds that Chinese newcomers entered mainly from three regions after 1984: Shanghai, Fujian and Heilongjiang. She argues that students come mainly from Fujian and Shanghai (Tajima 2003: 71), while Liu-Farrer (2011: 23–26) assumes from her literature and MOJ data review that Chinese students have generally come from the coastal regions, especially Fujian, Shanghai and the Northeast, as the latter is connected to Japan through historical ties.²¹¹ Other ties that promote the outmigration of Chinese to Japan are Japanese investment in China and trade relations (Liu-Farrer 2009b: 122). The composition of students' origins became more diverse in the 1990s, although Shanghai, Fujian and Beijing retained their status as the major sending regions; by the mid-1990s most students came from Northeastern regions (Liu-Farrer 2011: 25–26).²¹²

4.4 Return: Scale and Governmental Incentives

The attitudes of Chinese governments towards overseas Chinese have shifted many times since the 10th century, when the Song banned emigration. As early as the 1890s, Chinese governments became aware of the potential of investment by overseas Chinese. In the Mao era, when many countries had diplomatic relations with the Republic of China and overseas Chinese were considered “class enemies or agents of imperialism,” there was only little official contact between the central Chinese government and overseas Chinese (Nyíri 2005: 148–150).²¹³ Since 1978, the Chinese government's policies towards overseas Chinese²¹⁴ have become

²¹⁰ 3.6% received investor/business manager visas and 3% professorial visas. In terms of working contents, statistics on the occupations of all international student migrants show that most worked in translation/interpretation (29.6%), sales (22.9%), IT (6.9%), education (6.7%) and overseas operations (5.4%) after graduation (MHLW 2012; MOJ 2012b).

²¹¹ Due to the history of a Japanese presence in Northeast China, there are a large number of schools that offer Japanese language classes as a second or third language.

²¹² In 2001, Liaoning and Heilongjiang even became the most important sending regions (Liu-Farrer 2009b: 122).

²¹³ The negative stance against émigrés is not a new phenomenon in Chinese history; Pan (1990: 8, cited in Vasishth 1997: 110–111) cites edicts from 1712 and 1799 that call for the decapitation of all Chinese that have left or try to leave the country.

²¹⁴ Many labels have been used to designate people of Chinese ancestry and their descendants now living abroad for different lengths of time. Among these are *Chinese diaspora*, *overseas Chinese*, *Chinese overseas*, (*haiwai*) *huaren* or *huaqiao* (cf. Chen 2008: 39; Li and Li 2013: 17–18; Tan 2013: 2–3). The term *huaqiao* refers to Chinese who go abroad temporarily and intend to return to China (but may have acquired permanent residency of the host country, cf. Chen 2013: 311). Its English equivalent is “Chinese sojourner” and has often been used to characterize the *overseas Chinese* (Tan 2013: 2); its Japanese equivalent *kakyō* is the most widely used term in Japanese literature. The *huaqiao* can be

more “practical and realistic,” as governments sought to profit from overseas Chinese’ wealth and use the emigration of Chinese to the advantage of the Chinese economy (Tajima 2010: 1; Zhuang 2013: 37). Chinese could emigrate without severing the ties with Chinese officials; the overseas Chinese were no longer stigmatized but seen as a “resource that can be used to speed up China’s ‘socialist modernization,’” as a financially strong group that would invest in China’s economy in the future (Nyíri 2006: 95; 2005: 151–155; Renmin Ribao 1978/01/04; see also Hunger 2003: 60). In the same year, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (*Qiaoban*) of the State Council was reestablished and the All China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (*Zhonghua quanguo guiguo huaqiao lian hehui*) revived, of which also local associations exist (Zhuang 2013: 38).²¹⁵ Officially, these bodies attend to Chinese nationals overseas, yet they also target “ethnic Chinese citizens of other countries” (Nyíri 2005: 150). Since 1990, overseas Chinese were granted a number of rights by law, for example, a quota in admissions to universities (Nyíri 2005: 150).

Initiatives to profit from the overseas Chinese are not limited to the central government: in order to attract investment of overseas Chinese, local governments provide them with preferential treatment in terms of taxation, land rent or residence (Luo, Guo and Huang 2003: 92; Nyíri 2005: 156; Zhuang 2013: 39).²¹⁶ Measures adopted by both central and local governments include fairs held in European countries and the USA, but also delegations sent to the countries of residence of overseas Chinese (Luo 2013/02/28; Luo, Guo and Huang 2003: 100–101; Nyíri 2005: 151).²¹⁷ As is reflected in these policies, highly skilled need not

distinguished from the *haiwai huaren* in that the *haiwai huaren* have adopted the citizenship of their country of residence, while the *huaqiao* kept their Chinese (whether that is the mainland, Taiwan, or Hong Kong) citizenship. To distinguish the *overseas Chinese* (sojourners) from those who have taken on another country’s citizenship, Wang Gungwu has suggested the term *Chinese overseas* (Tan 2013: 3). In this study, the term “overseas Chinese” or “Chinese migrants” is used for simplicity and as an acknowledgement of the fluidity of migration and settlement plans.

²¹⁵ Other bodies include the “Overseas Chinese Commission (*Huaqiao weiyuanhui*, abbreviated as *Qiaoweihui*) of the National People’s Congress; the China Overseas Exchange Commission, affiliated with the *Qiaoban*; and the provincial-, city-, country-, and even district (*qu*)-level are the equivalents of these bodies” (Nyíri 2005: 150).

²¹⁶ One representative of the Human Resource Association of Zhejiang Province explained that academics and businessmen and women were also promised “prestige” next to housing and high salaries (as well as network integration plans) as incentives to return to Zhejiang (interview with the author, Hangzhou, 2012/02/26). Although the representative could not name concrete measures through which the local government of Hangzhou gave out “prestige,” the idea resonates with the following quote of Herbert G. Grubel and Anthony D. Scott (1967: 138): “There is only one significant way in which the movement of highly skilled workers seems to be impaired relative to that of workers, namely through society’s readiness to pay a relatively small number of them in the form of such non-monetary rewards as prestige, power and public recognition.”

²¹⁷ Regional bodies aim at strengthening the economic ties between certain regions of China and Japan, such as the Wenzhou Chamber of Commerce (*Riben Wenzhou zong shanghui*), for example. It holds regular events for Chinese and Japanese businessmen and women active in the respective regions to

return physically for the rest of their lives, but local governments seek to profit from their attachment to their home regions and the preferential treatment they receive when investing there.²¹⁸ Chinese migrants targeted in this study may be living in various places connecting different regions.

China ranks first among sending nations for international students, and Japan is among the top receiving nations of Chinese students (Liu-Farrer 2009a: 183–184). In order not to lose talent and to profit from the skills students acquired abroad, some scholarships come with the requirement to return after graduation and stay in China for a fixed amount of time (Luo, Guo and Huang 2003: 89).²¹⁹ The Chinese Ministry of Education since 1990 has adopted policies aiming at the return of students and scholars (MOE n.d.; Shiraki 2011: 13). The number of students returning to China from their global destinations has increased since the 2000s, accompanying China's economic development, especially after the global financial crisis during which China's economy continued to grow (Luo 2013/02/28; Wang 2013; Wang, Tang and Li 2014). Of all students that left the PRC since 1978, about two fifths have returned; in 2011, the return rate stood at 36.5% (Luo 2013/02/28).²²⁰ Between 2011 and 2012 the number of returning students increased again by almost 47% (Wang 2013). However, there are differences in the composition of returnees by their academic degrees: in 2013, for example, 63% returned with master's degrees, while 6% held PhDs (Zhang 2014/03/30).²²¹ About one third of those who return then work in higher education (Wang, Tang and Li 2014). The Chinese government is increasingly investing in the development of talent within its national boundaries, but is also seeking to attract highly skilled from abroad.²²² One core policy is the National Medium- and Long-term Talent Development Plan (2010–20), jointly issued by the Central

promote further exchange. Wenzhou is a region in Zhejiang that sends particularly many migrants abroad and profits tremendously from their investments and skills after return (Zheng 2010).

²¹⁸ Pál Nyíri (2005: 141) argues that the phenomenon of transnational migrants, who are "anchored" in a number of places, makes the term return migration obsolete. Yet, transnational migrants who move between places frequently are not the subject of this study, as the participants state wanting to return permanently. Nyíri also claims that through the phenomenon of transnationalism, the necessity to accumulate cultural capital has diminished, which cannot be affirmed for Chinese active in the Japanese economy.

²¹⁹ This is the case of a female PhD student, who had worked as a university instructor before entering a PhD program in Japan on a government-sponsored scholarship. She is bound by her scholarship contract to return and work in China for at least two years after graduation (interview No. 44).

²²⁰ In 2011, more than 185,000 students returned (Luo 2013/02/28).

²²¹ Robert Zeithammer and Ryan P. Kellogg (2013: 660) found that for doctoral and post-doctoral students in the U.S. in STEM fields, only one in ten has returned.

²²² A study by David Zweig (1997) shows that Chinese residing in the U.S. compare economic factors such as income and career opportunities in their current place of residence with the situation in China, leading to only few wanting to return; however, Zweig assumed that with continuous growth of the Chinese economy, the number of those intending to return would rise.

Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council in June 2010 (Wang 2010).²²³

Despite these policies and regulations targeting the return of highly skilled, Liu-Farrer (2011: 89–90) points out that students returning from Japan actually experience difficulty finding employment after returning to China; this is due to a lack of working experience and the bad reputation of schools in Japan, a result of the history of “ghost schools.” Students therefore pay attention to the reputation of a school or gain working experience before returning in order to find satisfactory jobs.²²⁴

²²³ Other policies include the Thousand Talents Program launched in 2008 and the Thousand Young Talents Program 2010, the 2011 Thousand Foreign Experts Program, the 2011 Special Talent Zone and the 2012 Ten Thousand Talent Plan. In addition to these national plans, local governments have launched their own plans accumulating over 2700 plans by August 2012, attracting more than 20,000 talents from overseas (Shiraki 2011: 13–15; Wang 2013).

²²⁴ In the 1990s, students returning from abroad (*haigui*, also called sea turtles) were highly valued, but with the rise in foreign students seeking jobs upon return and a rising number of graduates from China’s universities, these *haigui* have turned into *haidai* (sea weeds: a homophone of unemployed returnee) (Liu-Farrer 2011: 89–90).

5 Results: A Conceptualization of (Locational) Decision-Making Processes

This chapter traces the locational decision-making processes of highly skilled Chinese migrants in Japan. It presents results of the study, namely a conceptualization of thought processes that include the option of relocation to reach agents' goals or solve their problems. Analysis and, especially, contextualization of agents' locational decisions are crucial to understanding migration flows. Previous studies aimed at explaining or even predicting migration flows have suffered from a gap between agents' reports of their intended and their actual migration behavior. Understanding their decision-making processes underlying migration behavior helps bridge this gap. This chapter focuses on triggers to decision-making processes by tracing how different triggers impact the content of decision-making stages. It will clarify that migration is only one option among many to improve agents' lives, which is chosen depending on their understanding of problems, assessment of the potential of goal achievement and perception of behavioral control.

As De Jong *et al.* (1985: 46) point out, previous conceptualizations of migration decisions have suffered from "a lack of conceptual clarity among such terms as intentions, plans [...] and behavior." This study contributes to the explanation of migration behavior, defined as the sum of decisions and actions that together form locational trajectories of participants in the sample. Migration behavior comprises initial movement to Japan as well as the subsequent behaviors of settling, returning or moving on. In order to explain migration behavior of highly skilled Chinese migrants in Japan, the study contributes the analysis of one aspect within migration behavior over the life course by examining return and settlement decisions. Migration is a process (Adams 2004; Kalter 1997; Kley 2009: 53; Kley and Mulder 2010: 74; Tabor 2014: 127–128); it does not only consist of the action of physical relocation but includes previous actions such as purchasing a ticket, finding housing etc., and subsequent actions in the new country. The terms "action" and "behavior" are closely related, as a number of actions aiming at the same goal can be seen as indicators of behavior. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980: 30) point out the difficulty in differentiating between a single action and categories of behavior, as it is only "possible to observe specific actions that are assumed to be instances of the general class." The behaviors of settlement

and return migration consist of a number of actions.²²⁵ Return migration comprises the action of physical relocation (of participants but also of material things), but also preparations for return in host and home country, including the actions of quitting one's apartment and organizing housing in the home country, for example. Return migration is therefore not a single action but a behavior consisting of several actions culminating in physical relocation.

In Kley's (2009: 54) conceptualization, migration decision-making processes consist of three stages: considering migration, planning it, and realizing it. The results of this study redefine these stages, culminating in a model of locational decision making grounded in agents' experiences and circumstances. "Stages" refer to clear-cut sequences in the decision-making process; agents are unlikely to move between the stages, as abandoning a decision comes at a psychological cost (Kley 2011; 2009; Kley and Mulder 2010). The decision-making model in this study consists of four stages: 1) situation analysis, 2) option evaluation, 3) planning the behavior (and carrying out preparatory actions), and 4) realizing the concluding action (physical relocation). Situation analysis ends with the intention to change the situation or aborting the decision-making process, option evaluation ends with the choice of an option, and the planning stage leads over to the final stage of carrying out the "final" action of relocation. In order for this to be considered return migration behavior (as opposed to a short-term visit), the intention of the agent must be long-term relocation. After the action is carried out, the agent finds himself in a new situation, and a feedback loop ensues.

Stages are divided into phases, which are more flexible; agents may move back and forth between the phases over time, remaining within the same decision-making stage. The stage of situation analysis is broken down as follows: an agent's initial situation is interrupted by an event that may or may not create time pressure to act. If the agent does not perceive time pressure, he enters the phase of situation assessment, followed by either a phase of problem definition and framing or setting of new goals, then reaching the end point of the stage: the intention to change his situation or to stop the decision-making process. If he does perceive time pressure, he forms a mental model of the evolving situation and its impact on his primary goals, also culminating in the end point of the stage of either intending to act to solve his problem or to refrain from taking action. Triggers can be any type of event, a term loosely defined in this study to include the end of a set time frame for living abroad, life events such as marriage or child birth, the end of education or training, starting a new job etc. (see Section 5.1.1). The following stage of option evaluation is divided into the phases of option identification and

²²⁵ Agents applying for permanent residency or taking on the host country's nationality, buying a house, founding a company etc. can be hypothesized to show settlement tendencies in their migration behavior. These individual actions, however, are not enough to predict permanent settlement: agents may take these steps only to make their lives in Japan easier by not having to renew visas every few years, investing in Japan's housing market or starting a transnational business to prepare for return.

evaluation. In the phase of evaluation, options are checked for their impact on agents' primary goals, but also their feasibility against agents' perceptions of behavioral control (Ajzen 1988: 132–144; Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 21–22, Section 2.2.4 and 5.2.2). The stage ends with the choice of an option. In the subsequent planning stage, agents have already decided on a behavior and prepare the course of action. At this stage agents already take lesser actions, such as discussing their plans with network contacts, researching and booking plane tickets, yet intervening factors may lead to aborting, delaying or rushing single actions or the behavior as a whole. Once the action is carried out, the agent finds himself in a changed reality, a new situation, and enters a feedback loop of this decision. The decision-making process is depicted in Figure 2.1.

After carrying out the final action of his planned behavior, in the case of this study, through relocation, the agent finds himself in a new situation. If he had rushed the decision, he may now assess his situation and, at the end of another decision-making process, decide to correct his initial decision. Usually, however, in the absence of time pressure, an agent will not immediately question his return decision, but only consider international relocation again if another event triggers such a decision-making process. The differences between the two decision-making processes and the feedback loop they create are depicted in Figure 2.1 through the indication of Type A and Type B Decisions.

This study deals with decision-making processes that concern locational decisions. The aim of this chapter on the decision-making process is to explain why, within a group of agents that decided to move to Japan for various periods of time, some stick to their original intention and others deviate from it. Migrants interviewed in Japan are conceptualized as acting in a feedback loop of their initial migration decisions to spend parts of their lives in Japan. The different stages of the decision-making process presented in this chapter contain explanations for the fact that similar events lead to different outcomes, highlighting problem definition and framing as well as the evaluation of options, which is influenced by perceptions of behavioral control. Relocation is usually only one option among several. The following sections trace the process of how agents make decisions about relocation. Decision-making processes about relocation can be triggered by different events, which most often relate to the end of a set time frame for living abroad (expected event), but which could also be unexpected events (acute problems). The type of trigger decides the sequence and speed (or even skipping) of phases in the decision-making process. In real-life decisions, the phases are not neatly separated, but shifting environments complicate situation analysis and option evaluation. The less precise a problem or goal definition is, the less structured is the decision-making process (see also Lipshitz and Pras 2005: 92).²²⁶

²²⁶ Phases need not neatly follow each other, but agents may skip phases; Lipshitz and Pras (2005: 104) observe this phenomenon: the process “includes numerous leaps forwards and loops backward.”

The process is also influenced by the level of clarity of goals, that is, what exactly constitutes a better life.²²⁷ An agent may try to combine and achieve competing goals that shift in importance during the life course. As migration affects all areas of life (career, family and lifestyle preferences), the stakes are high, and compromise between competing goals, but also between rivaling interests of other influential agents such as parents, spouse and employer, is difficult to achieve.

These conceptualizations of decision-making and migration differ from previous explanations in the definition of stages and sequence of phases, analysis of differences in processes by various triggers and differentiation of feedback loops. It addresses the question under which circumstances migrants consider return migration, a question yet unanswered by quantitative studies that lack the context of agents' locational decision-making processes. Migration is only one solution to ill-structured problems,²²⁸ and, depending on the trigger and agents' perceptions of time pressure, the stage of situation analysis differs. If the agent perceives time pressure, the stage of analysis resembles decision-making processes as described by Burns (2005: 17): agents form a mental model "to describe, explain, and predict an evolving situation," feeling the need to react quickly on the basis of their understanding of the situation. In the absence of time pressure, situation analysis begins with superficial situation assessment followed by a phase of setting new goals or of analytical problem definition and framing.²²⁹

This chapter applies the decision-making model introduced in Section 2.3.2 and depicted in Figure 2.1 to migration decisions of highly skilled in Chinese in Japan. The conceptualization of the process and its phases is a product of empirical data analysis and mirrors approaches from migration theory as well as decision-making theory.²³⁰ The chapter is organized as follows: Section 5.1 looks at the

²²⁷ Lipshitz and Pras (2005: 92) point out that there are various ways in which problems can be ill-defined: "missing information or inadequate understanding of (a) the nature of the problem (i.e., current vs. goal states) and (b) solution strategies and the causal relations in the problem's domain."

²²⁸ Lipshitz and Pras (2005: 92) compile several definitions, e.g., Voss's (1990: 315): "Well-structured problems are those in which the initial state, goal state, constraints, and operators are precisely defined. Ill-structured problems then are those in which one or more of the above are not precisely defined."

²²⁹ Situation awareness is a term often found in the literature on decision-making, yet often defined differently. The term is used to summarize cognitive processes before examining potential options. In this study, these cognitive processes are differentiated: participants consider their current situation at the beginning of the decision-making process (situation assessment in a narrow sense), identify further goals or areas in which they seek an improvement, and then move on to the next stage of weighing the impact of migration (or other solutions) on their desired and current situation. These newly defined goals are probably not clearly defined, leading to problems in finding suitable options to achieve them.

²³⁰ Decision-making research is slow to incorporate long-term decision making into its studied phenomena: while CDM studied decision-making processes and problem-solving strategies in the laboratory, NDM research has focused on real-life decisions under time pressure. NDM scholars have pointed out that in real-life situations, problems are most often ill-structured and environments shift during the decision-making process (Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 7). The decisions analyzed under the NDM framework are all aimed at solving problems. Although international (return) migration may be

stage of situation analysis, beginning with triggers to the decision-making process. If the trigger leads to perceived time pressure, the agent forms a mental image of the evolving situation and its impact on his primary goals. The stage ends with the choice of an option. In the absence of time pressure, the agent assesses his current situation, looking especially at potential gaps between primary goals and his current situation. Depending on the outcome of the situation assessment, an agent either sets new goals or identifies more concretely the underlying problem leading to dissatisfaction. The stage ends with the agent's intention to change his situation or to terminate the process. The most complex stage is option evaluation (largest Section 5.2), in which a small number of options are checked for their impact on primary goals and their feasibility against perceived constraints. It concludes with the choice of an option. The following stage is planning the resulting behavior, presented in Section 5.3; this comprises resulting decisions (e.g. where and when to move, see Tabor 2014: 126), but also lesser actions such as researching and booking the plane ticket. The final stage is "action," which concludes the behavior. In the case of migration, this description is not quite accurate: as migration is a process and consists of many actions that together constitute migration behavior, a separation of the single actions can be somewhat artificial. Lesser actions are conceptualized as part of the planning stage, while, in fact, the agent does move back between actions and planning; at this stage, intervening factors may delay, rush or terminate the plan. Physical relocation is conceptualized as the "final action," after which the agent finds himself in a new situation (although the time after arrival also forms part of the migration process). Then, a feedback loop ensues (Section 5.4). This chapter focuses only on the *process* of decision-making; Chapter 6 zooms in how various factors influence different agents.

5.1 Initial Situation, Triggers, and Situation Analysis

The first stage of situation analysis is triggered by an event. Participants of the study are considered to be in a feedback loop of their original migration decision to come to Japan. Depending on the trigger to the decision-making process, the stage of situation analysis comprises either the phases of generating a mental image of the evolving situation or of situation assessment and setting new goals or problem definition and framing. This section analyzes the impact of various triggers on decision-making processes that influence settlement or return migration decisions. It maps the factors considered when comparing the current situation and its gap with (primary) life goals, therefore applying the model to thought processes of Chinese migrants to Japan about moving.

a solution to a number of problems, it differs from NDM situations in some regards, as shown in this chapter, leading to differences in sequences and speed of decision-making and the considered factors.

5.1.1 Triggers of the Decision-Making Process

The decision-making process is usually triggered by an event (Hollnagel 2007). In the case of migration, the trigger can also be the approaching end of a set time frame for living abroad.²³¹ Expected or unexpected events, e.g. child birth, may change a migrant's position in the household or his working environment. As a consequence of these changes, primary goals and/or the migrant's negotiation leverage may change. As a reaction to the trigger, a migrant assesses his current situation, how the event changed his position and priorities and the potential to achieve his life goals. This subsection enumerates events that have been found to trigger decision-making processes that include return migration as potential options to solve problems or achieve goals.

Migration research has identified changes in household composition or the ends or beginnings of employment or education as events that increase the likelihood to consider and carry out migration (Achenbach 2012; Huinink and Kley 2008; Kley 2011; 2009; Kley and Mulder 2010; Kulu and Milewski 2007; Mulder 1993; Rossi 1955; Wagner 1989; Willekens 1991; 1987).²³² For return migration, additional factors such as having achieved a goal (or failed to do so) or changes in external circumstances are points in time when return is considered (Cassarino 2004; Cerase 1974; DaVanzo and Morrison 1982), therefore, the inclusion of original plans and motivation for migration is crucial.²³³

²³¹ In migration research, relocation decisions have been attributed to dissatisfaction with one's location. However, as has been pointed out by Speare, Goldstein and Frey (1975: 178, cited in Kley 2009: 42) "not all mobility decisions begin with the development of stress of dissatisfaction to a point where one begins to consider moving. In some cases, the decision to move is forced on the individual or household" by any number of events such as divorce, job changes etc. Even if "unhappiness" is seen as a trigger, it is usually a smaller-size event that prompts a thought process about one's situation, such as, for example, having a negative experience that leads an agent to reconsider his life choices.

²³² Comparatively little research is concerned with the *timing* of migration, most publications deal with the question of whether and why agents move.

²³³ Having achieved a clearly defined goal is a measurable point in time (graduating from university, saving up a certain amount of money). In the case of ill-defined goals, such as "gaining working experience," without criteria as to the content or length of time, it is difficult to predict when exactly an agent will consider the goal achieved and consider returning. Having failed to achieve a goal can be equally hard to pinpoint to a date, again depending on the clarity of goal definition; if an agent gives up on saving "enough" money for a better life back home and returns without the amount, it is difficult to predict when he will give up on the goal. In contrast, if the goal is to get a degree in four years, an agent will probably spend an additional year to achieve said goal instead of returning, simply extending the time frame.

The "end of set time frame" and goals from the spheres of career and family are addressed in the following sections. In the literature, especially for lower skilled workers, goals to be achieved in the host country include having saved enough money (Cerase 1974). Yet, although saving up money to be able to afford a house in China's booming real estate market is a goal towards which some migrants are working, it is usually not a point in time after which they consider returning; other goals are more prevalent. Transnational connections, although not triggers in themselves, may serve in this function if a contact opens up a business opportunity, for example, or family members in other countries become dependent on the migrants. These kinds of triggers are addressed in the following sections. Socially

Table 5.1 shows the triggers Chinese migrants in Japan expect to lead to return migration, while in the case of returnees it illustrates which events actually were decisive for the timing of their return migration decisions. Agents could only give one answer to this question (single response question, SRQ).²³⁴

Table 5.1: Triggers for the Timing of Return Movement (Considerations) by Point in the Migration Process, SRQ

	returned to China	living in Japan, considering migration	decided to stay in Japan	total
end of set time frame	20	16	-	36
family reasons	6	5	-	11
career reasons	14	13	-	27
external events	2	1	-	3
no concrete plans	-	24	10	34
no answer	-	1	-	1
total	43	59	10	112

compiled by the author.

From Table 5.1 one can conclude that the end of a set time frame was the decisive point in time at which to consider (and carry out) a return to China for the largest group of returnees. For the 69 interviewees residing in Japan, 16 expect the end of their set time frame to be the point at which they would return, while 24 of those still in the decision-making process remain open about the time they wish to spend in Japan.²³⁵ Expected events (marriage, child birth, the end of set time frame) lead to agents considering return migration even before the event has happened, yet

constructed points in time may act as triggers from different spheres (end of set time frame, family- and career-related life phase); most often mentioned in the sample was turning 30 years old. At that socially constructed point in time agents either expect themselves or are expected to have achieved several “goals” such as having gotten married or reached a career stage; no matter what the defined goal, once that birthday draws near, the agent himself and his network question whether he is “on track” in various life spheres or where there is room for improvement.

²³⁴ The categories comprise the following subcategories: “end of a set time frame” includes “end of studies,” “set time for working experience” and “return to China at age 30.” Family reasons consist of “parent fallen sick,” “child entering school,” “spouse makes the decision,” “child birth” and “child graduates school, job in China.” Career reasons are composed of “job offer,” “retirement,” “want returned friends’ success” and “lost job.” External events refer to the events of March 11, 2011, and the category of “no concrete plans” contains “no concrete plans of returning, still in Japan” and “no concrete plans of returning, international experience first.”

²³⁵ The 24 are composed of 7 participants (3 female, 4 male) who are open to staying, and another 17 (13 female, 4 male) who wish to return but are uncertain about the time frame of returning.

when exactly an agent enters the decision-making process with situation assessment and subsequent definition of the underlying problem or of new goals remains unclear.

The following subsections zoom in on the influence of expected and unexpected events, organized by whether they create time pressure. They only deal with the timing and not with the contents of negotiation processes and evaluations of one option over the other to solve problems, which is covered in Section 5.2. Different triggers lead to diverse types, speed, contents and thoroughness of thought processes.

5.1.1.1 Events Triggering Situation Assessment (No Time Pressure)

The most often mentioned trigger to locational decision-making processes is the end of a set time frame for living in Japan (32%), followed by career- and family-related events, mentioned by 24% and 10% of the participants, respectively. This section focuses first on the expected event of the end of a set time frame and then zooms in on career- and family-related events, first enumerating events from these spheres and then differentiating whether the mentioned events create time pressure.

Set Time Frame for Living Abroad

By definition, the end of a set time frame for living in Japan is an expected event and tied to a migrant's initial migration motivation. All but 35 migrants (that is, a total of two thirds of the sample) had set a concrete time frame (either in terms of years or of stages in the career/family life) for their stays in Japan. However, with more time between an intention of action and its execution, the less likely it becomes that a person will stick to the plan.²³⁶ In the sample under consideration (highly skilled who overwhelmingly entered Japan as students), most stay for at least two years.²³⁷ Of the ones residing in Japan at the time of the interview, the average length of stay stands at roughly 10.5 years in 2011, although 56% had intended to stay shorter (only to study, only to work or for no more than ten years).

²³⁶ As to the time it takes to make a decision (no matter the deviation of the original time frame), Luo, Guo Fei and Huang Ping (2003: 101–102) found that it took half of their sample less than six months, but six to twelve months, one to two years and over two years for 16.7% each of the sample. The issue of time is addressed in the interim discussion (Section 5.5) of this chapter.

²³⁷ In order to be considered migrants, agents need to live in another place for at least one year (United Nations Statistics Division 1998). Among the students of the sample, three only stayed for one year as they entered Japan as exchange students, but received their degrees from Chinese universities. Another three participants only stayed for two years, because they left after the completion of master's programs, or, in a fourth case, the participant failed to get into the university of his choice and therefore aborted the stay. Liu-Farrer (2011: 63) states that Chinese students stay in educational institutions in Japan for an average of four to seven years.

Of the 43 who returned, the average length of stay was little less than eight years, which, for 88% of them, is within the time frame they had intended. A high number, therefore, does stick to the intended time frame, although due to the vague definition of the original intention (e.g. “study and work”) this finding is not very telling for the connection between intention and behavior. A closer look at intended time frames, intervening factors and actual length of stay is provided in the following tables (5.2 and 5.3).

Table 5.2: Original Intention of Length of Stay and Changes in Actual Length of Stay, SRQ

	stuck to the plan	sticking to the plan	shortening stay	lengthening stay	total
open to staying²³⁸	25		3	-	28
open to staying unless family chooses otherwise	5		2	-	7
study and work	15	8	5	5	33
only study	11	4	10	11	36
only work	1	5	-	2	8
total	74		20	18	112

compiled by the author.

Table 5.2 shows that the majority had stuck to their original plan or intended to stay within the time frame. However, roughly 43% (n=33) of those who did set a time frame (n=77) deviate from their original intention (19% shorten, 23% extend), while only 10–15% of those open to staying shortened their stays. The reasons behind sticking to or deviating from the original time frame of migration are yet unknown. A closer look at the 77 participants of the study who set a time frame for their stays in Japan shows that the factors they named as triggers for considering return movement differ from their initial expectation:

²³⁸ About the same share of men and women cited factors from the categories of original intentions.

Table 5.3: Actual Timing of Return (Considerations) vs. Original Intention of Stay, SRQ

	study and work	only study	only work	total
end of studies	5	18	-	23
set time limit for working experience	6	2	3	11 ²³⁹
other reasons	21	16	5	42
no answer	1	-	-	1
total	33	36	8	77

compiled by the author.

Table 5.3 shows that half of those who had set out only to get a degree in Japan changed their plans, five out of eight who were only planning on working in Japan and over 80% of those who wanted to get a degree and gain working experience explained that other events than they had envisioned actually triggered return considerations. Although two thirds of the sample (including those without set time frames for the length of stay) stuck or intended to stick to the original plan in terms of length of stay, a closer look reveals that this is in part due to ill-defined goals/lengths of stay or a result not of the expected triggers of relocation but of other factors. However, agents may still lie within the intended time frame/goal, even if a different event triggered return considerations.²⁴⁰ Of the participants who had set a time frame, two thirds actually considered moving at a different point in time than they had expected. The difference and gap in expectation and reality is important in two ways: first, although the expected events may trigger the process, the decision at the end is not necessarily moving (agents extend their stays). Second, other events than the ones anticipated prior to moving may trigger a decision-making process that includes the option of return.

Career Events

Events from the career sphere triggering decision-making processes that include return migration as an option to achieve goals or solve problems could comprise receiving a job offer, achieving a career goal, employers' requests for relocation of the employee, promotions of the agent or persons in his network, which may

²³⁹ This number is especially interesting if divided by gender: once in Japan, no women explained to consider return after a "set time limit for working experience," although three women said their original purpose of coming to Japan was to work and for 15 to gain working experience after being awarded a degree. To be more precise, three women mentioned the end of their working lives as the time frame when they would consider return, yet they could also imagine staying in Japan. More women than men were open to staying in Japan at the time of the interview (in contrast to about the same percentage when asked about their original intention).

²⁴⁰ Examples could include cases in which an agent wanted to gain working experience in Japan and did achieve that goal, but decided to return after a family member fell sick. In such a case, the goal is met and he would have returned eventually, yet a different trigger lead the agent to consider return and due to the unspecific nature of the goal he will still have achieved it.

cause him to wonder why it was not him that was promoted, but also unemployment. Retirement, which might also be seen as the end of a set time frame, is included in this category of career-related events.²⁴¹ While career considerations decide the timing of return migration and sometimes constitute the reason for moving, in the interview data it is hard to point to events that *trigger* a decision-making process. Oftentimes, changes in employers or even in occupation (and therefore potentially return migration) form part of a career strategy²⁴² or are the result of acute dissatisfaction in agents’ working lives. As agents did not differentiate clearly between triggers of considerations and triggers of movement, the following table 5.4 shows events from the career sphere that (agents expect to) decide the point of return, while there may be more triggers that start a locational decision-making process.

Table 5.4: Decisive Factors for Timing of Return from the Career Sphere, SRQ

	living in Japan			returned to China			total
	female	male	subtotal	female	male	subtotal	
job offer	4	3	7	2	10	12	19
career success of friends	-	-	0	-	1	1	1
retirement	3	2	5	-	-	0	5
unemployment	-	1	1	-	1	1	2
total	7	6	13	2	12	14	27

compiled by the author.

Only rarely will the most often cited reason of “job offer” be a trigger to a decision-making process that includes return migration; this is only the case if the offer reaches the agent “out of the blue” and then leads to a phase of situation assessment.²⁴³ However, success of other agents, unemployment and retirement do constitute expected and unexpected events that trigger such a process.

It is difficult to categorize the career events mentioned by participants as triggers to locational decision-making processes into expected and unexpected events and to identify potentially resulting time pressure. In fact, while some career-related events may be unexpected, they usually do not create time pressure; only “sudden” unemployment can be considered an event that might create time

²⁴¹ In contrast, the end of an educational program is not included in career events but in “end of a set time frame.” This differentiation is chosen based on agents’ conceptualizations of goals for their stays in Japan. Graduating from university and retirement refer to different phases in the life course and different levels of economic activities. As for this study, career-related activities of sample participants and where agents carry these out are of interest.

²⁴² Increasing work–family balance could be a reason to change one’s working life (Achenbach 2014).

²⁴³ However, agents usually apply for jobs, attend fairs or notify companies/headhunters that they are looking for employment after having gone through a decision-making process and chosen “change of employment/location” as the best option. In this conceptualization, “job offer” would shape the planning stage and not act as a trigger to a decision-making process which ends in return movement.

pressure in the agents' minds. This depends on the individual situation: availability of savings, career goals and assessment of career chances. Therefore, the sense of crisis and perception of time pressure are likely to differ individually.

Family-related Life Events

Family-related life events that could trigger a decision-making process that leads to the consideration and choice of migration as an option to improve an agent's life include cohabitation with a partner, marriage, a break-up or divorce, child birth, children entering school, and sudden care needs of parents in China (see also Kley and Mulder 2010: 79). Other "events" from the family-related sphere could also include family members informing the agent of their wish for migration, a child's problems at school etc.²⁴⁴ Whether these events actually lead to international movement depends on the subsequent stages, but they trigger situation analysis and, in the case of potential return migrants, the decision-making process will most probably include a comparison of Japan and China.

Family-related life events that increase or diminish the number of persons in a household change housing needs (see Rossi 1955), among them cohabitation, marriage, divorce, death of a family member, childbirth or taking in parents to take care of them in old age. This refers to the space needed and the location (availability of medical care, support network, quality of schools etc. nearby), but also child-friendly or, for ageing parents, accessible housing. Especially the birth of children (or even just the intention of having children in the near future) influences factors considered for an agent's location: housing needs, child care services (supportive networks of parents and friends), where best to ensure a child's identity formation and the best education, among other factors.²⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the event starts a situation analysis and option evaluation to improve identified short-comings of the status quo.

²⁴⁴ An upcoming birthday can also trigger the decision-making process.

²⁴⁵ What constitutes the "best" education or which identity parents want to foster in a child differs individually, refer to Section 5.2.2.2.

Table 5.5: Decisive Factors for Timing of Return (Considerations) from the Family Sphere, SRQ

	living in Japan			returned to China			total
	female	male	subtotal	female	male	subtotal	
parents fall sick	-	-	0	-	1	1	1
spouse decides	2	-	2	-	-	0	2
child birth	-	1	1	-	1	1	2
children entering school	-	1	1	2	-	2	3
child graduates school (job offer in China)	-	-	0	-	2	2	2
total	2	2	4	2	4	6	10

compiled by the author.

The table above shows that, although, as argued in the following chapters, family is a very important factor when deciding where to live, only very few interviewees refer to family-related life events as the *decisive* factor for the *timing* of their decisions to return or stay. This does not mean that those events are not important for timing, but they might form part of synchronized events (see Mulder and Wagner 1993: 57). Family-related events most often constitute expected events with ample time to prepare for changing circumstances. Events that could create time pressure are sudden care needs of family members and union dissolutions.

5.1.1.2 Unexpected Events Creating Time Pressure

The type of event, that is, whether it is anticipated or unexpected, or whether it creates time pressure to act, decides the number of options considered, but also the thoroughness, content, sequence and speed of evaluation of options.²⁴⁶ In those cases, decisions are made faster (as the phases of situation assessment and problem definition/framing or setting new goals are skipped in exchange of a mental image of the evolving situation and its impact on the decision maker) and fewer options are evaluated (especially for their long-term impact) than in less time-pressured decision-making processes. As explained in the previous subsection, events from the family-related and career sphere (potentially) leading to a sense of crisis and time pressure include sudden unemployment, care needs of family members and union dissolutions. Another type of event with this effect is external events.

²⁴⁶ In times of crisis, the acceptance towards bold and fast decisions is higher than in times of stability (Etzioni 1967; Lindblom 1959; 1979). The necessity to act fast and high stakes are likely to reduce the thoroughness both of deliberation but also of discussion with affected agents. In this way, locational decision-making processes differ in the stage of situation analysis from situations without time pressure. Only after taking action, that is, in the feedback loop of Type B decisions, does the agent assess his situation more thoroughly and evaluates his rushed decision, potentially correcting it.

External events that trigger a decision-making process are those that influence a large number of people, such as the crash of stock markets (and its impact on the real economy), political changes (changes in policies or political revolts) or the events of March 11, 2011. While many participants explained that they considered returning after 3/11 or reconsidered their locational decisions due to the effects of Japan’s continuing economic slump, these events rarely led to movement.

Table 5.6: External Events Decisive for the Timing of Return, SRQ

	living in Japan		returned to China		total
	female	male	female	male	
March 11, 2011	-	1	1	1	3

compiled by the author.

In the sample, only three interviewees cited an external event as decisive for the timing of their return decisions, namely the earthquake, tsunami and subsequent nuclear crisis surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi Reactor. This events may serve in the double function of trigger to the decision-making process²⁴⁷ and as intervening variable later in the decision-making process, when a migrant was set on one course of action, but due to the influence of an external event reconsiders priorities and option evaluations.²⁴⁸ As already explained for events from other spheres, although these are the events that are decisive for the timing of return, they do not reveal the surrounding circumstances and perceptions of the agents; 3/11 triggered considerations about movement for the vast majority of migrants interviewed, yet the resulting behavior differed: some stayed, some moved (to

²⁴⁷ Excerpt from interview with a married, male employee in the field of finance:

A: “I worked for them for three years. Then I went back. The trigger was last year’s earthquake. My wedding was in March in Shanghai. Then there was the earthquake. I didn’t want to go back [to Japan]. I talked to my parents about returning, and I had already been in Japan for more than 8 years, so I had already wanted to go back, that was another trigger, and I talked to my wife about going back, so last year at the end of April 2011, we broke off all ties and came back to Shanghai. At the time of the wedding I was still at the company, hadn’t quit yet, so I went back, quit and moved to Shanghai.”

Q: “If it wasn’t for the earthquake?”

A: “I don’t know, I might have gone, I might not. I don’t know.”

Q: “Was it about the earthquake or Fukushima?”

A: “I guess it was more about Fukushima, we had just gotten married, were thinking about having a family, we were in that situation, so that was part of the fear. We didn’t know how the situation would develop, so there was that fear, our parents were scared as well, so we went back” (interview No. 86).

²⁴⁸ One example of the latter is the case of a male student in the social sciences, whose parents also reside in Japan. He had planned on finding a job in Tokyo, marrying a Chinese woman and staying in Japan, but after the earthquake of March 11, 2011, he changed his opinion. In answering what had changed exactly to make him reconsider (his original settlement intention), he explains: “Ah, the nuclear [situation]. The pollution is too serious, I think. Now I don’t eat fish in Japan and vegetables [from] Tōhoku, and [the] Japanese economic situation is not very good, I think [in the] Chinese [economy, I] will have more chances,” although he believes that it is difficult to find a job in China due to tough competition (interview No. 62).

other parts of Japan or to China) for a limited amount of time,²⁴⁹ others went back for good. The way agents reacted to the same trigger ranged from rushed decisions based on mental models of the evolving situation (Type B decisions) to analytic decision-making (Type A decisions). The following subchapters will explain possible reasons for these differences.

5.1.1.3 Impact of Different Types of Events on Decision-Making Processes

Different types of events lead to different decision-making processes, in which return migration is included as an option to solve problems or achieve goals, in short, to lead to a “better” life. This section presents events that agents expected to or that actually did lead to movement.²⁵⁰ Anticipated events, such as the end of a set time frame or child birth, provide the agent with sufficient time to assess his situation, identify new goals or problems, evaluate options, and plan a behavior. If the event is unexpected, depending on whether the agent perceives time pressure to act, sequence, speed and content of phases are likely to differ. In the case of crises that create time pressure, because the agent feels that his health or livelihood are in danger, he will skip the phase of a thorough situation assessment and instead form a mental image of his current state and the impact of the problem on it. He will simulate the evolving situation and consider only few options to improve his situation without thoroughly screening their impact on his primary goals in the long term. After carrying out the option, he enters a feedback loop without as much time pressure, in which he is able to carry out a situation assessment and may decide to act correctively. An unexpected event, such as unemployment or sudden illness of a family member, may trigger decision-making processes that evolve similar to the former or latter cycle described; an agent may, for example, relocate quickly to take care of a sick parent and in the feedback loop assess his situation and potentially “correct” his behavior, but he may also see the unexpected event as a trigger to assess his situation more generally if he does not perceive the need to act quickly. The type of trigger therefore directly impacts the subsequent phases in the stage of situation analysis: if the trigger creates time pressure, an agent forms a mental image of the evolving situation and shortens the subsequent stages, if there is no time pressure, an agent rapidly assesses his current situation and, depending on the outcome, either identifies underlying problems or sets new goals.

²⁴⁹ Due to the definition of return migrants as agents who spend one year in their “own country” (United Nations Statistics Division 1998: 95), brief relocations are not considered return migration.

²⁵⁰ Due to the methodology of this study, in which interviews focused on concrete decision-making processes only of return migration, not all events that trigger a decision-making process in which return migration forms a part of potential options are depicted; instead, this section focuses on those events that actually did lead to movement or on expected events thought to mark the point of departure.

5.1.2 *Situation Analysis*

Triggered by different types of events, in the stage of situation analysis an agent enters either the phase of situation assessment or forms a mental image of the evolving situation and its impact on him. In the phase of situation assessment, an agent checks whether he has achieved his goals in various areas of life and whether he is satisfied with the different spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences, but also includes a forward looking perspective and assesses whether he will keep being (dis)satisfied if he continues his behavior. He then moves on to the definition of the underlying problem or of new goals. This section presents the factors participants consider in these phases. After zooming in on that process, Subsection 5.1.2.3 focuses on an agent's mental image of his current state as it results from *unexpected* events after which directly follows the stage of evaluation of options, presented in Section 5.2.

5.1.2.1 Situation Assessment

Triggered by an event, an agent enters a phase of situation assessment. Depending on the event and perceived time pressure, agents will vary in the degree of thoroughness in the situation assessment. This applies both to the number of spheres included in their situation assessment (career, family, lifestyle preferences), but also how deeply agents look at each sphere. Sudden unemployment, for example, may lead to a situation assessment only in the career sphere, while expected events may lead to a situation assessment of all spheres of life. Situation assessment or awareness is used by NDM scholars to refer to an agent's knowledge or representation of a problem or situation.²⁵¹ In the context of this study, however, situation assessment refers to an agent's general understanding of his situation, assessing his level of satisfaction in various spheres of life.²⁵² In the interviews, participants reflect on initial and return migration decisions. Their situation assessment, when an expected event draws near or has happened, often focuses on whether they have reached goals they had set for that time frame or are prepared for the change in their lives/lifestyles after the event creates new circumstances (child birth). Especially at the end of a set time frame, a migrant will look at the initial goals of his migration, whether he has achieved them, and even simulate how his intended subsequent behavior in accordance to his initial intention will affect his life goals (which will have shifted since the

²⁵¹ As NDM originally developed in a (military) crisis context and is usually applied to expert decision making under severe time pressure (e.g. fire fighters, Klein 1993), decision-makers' understanding of a situation is crucial to choosing the right behavior to alleviate a critical situation.

²⁵² A focus on satisfaction, particularly in the spheres of work and family, has been found to strongly affect return intention probabilities (Iredale, Guo and Rozario 2003: 5; Mak 1997; Waldorf 1995).

initial movement). The focus of whether the agent has reached goals and is satisfied with life *in Japan* underlies his situation assessment. If the trigger is an event as opposed to the end of a set time frame for migration, situation assessment must not necessarily carry with it the connotation of assessing satisfaction connected to his location, but the question of where best to solve problems or achieve goals may happen in later phases.²⁵³ Not all spheres of life must be part of an agent's situation assessment; depending on the trigger, he may only look at his level of satisfaction and understanding of his situation in that sphere (working life after a promotion or after the end of a set time frame during which he wanted to gain working experience in Japan). However, as over time and with life phases priorities shift and other areas of life such as family gain in importance with life phase transitions, these spheres may form part of situation assessment. Locational decisions are based on different and continually changing individually defined sets of priorities. This section focuses not on the timing, but on the contents of assessments, which migrants undertake.

Aspects that influence the outcome of situation assessment include whether the migrant chose moving and Japan as a destination voluntarily, his larger life plan and (the existence/absence and content of) specific goals for the stay in Japan.²⁵⁴ At the time of the interview in Japan, agents were in the midst of a feedback loop of their initial migration decision, so whether the choice of Japan as a destination was a compromise or agents' first choice may influence attitudes towards living in Japan and what constitutes acceptable goal achievement.²⁵⁵ Goals for interviewees' stays in Japan and general life goals range from a variety of goals in the spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences.²⁵⁶ The following sections zoom in on situation assessment in those empirically identified spheres.

²⁵³ This is true if the problem is framed as the result of living in Japan or if, in the evaluation of options, circumstances to achieve a goal are more favorable in China.

²⁵⁴ For participants who have not set clear goals for the stay in Japan, at the end of a certain time frame (either for the stay in Japan or any other, potentially socially constructed point in time), this can lead either to frustration as unspecified goals have not been reached or to a deviation from the proposed model as participants are not able to judge their "success" of living abroad. This relates to Huber's (1986) statement that "the distinction between problems with a well-defined and an ill-defined goal state" are relevant for decision-making. If criteria, for example for "gaining working experience," are not set from the beginning, the goal must be considered ill-defined.

²⁵⁵ Of 112 interviews included in this study, 82 chose Japan as the destination of their migration freely, 12 chose Japan for family, 7 for work and 11 for immigration policy reasons. Of the 11 that went to Japan and not another country for immigration policy reasons, 6 have by now returned to China and 5 stayed (one for five years, but the others for more than 10 years). Only one participant actually did go to the country to which he originally wanted to migrate after spending time in Japan, but returned to China after all.

²⁵⁶ The fact that career factors rank so high in the sample has to do with sampling bias. However, if an event endangers the more basic needs of migrants, such as safety (after 3/11) or other forms of physical well-being (after job loss), the sense of urgency leads to faster and less thorough decision-making processes. Agents may have difficulties meeting competing goals from different spheres, complicating problem definition and option evaluation.

Career considerations were the overwhelming reason for leaving China for participants; about two thirds entered Japan with the plan (or are open to the option) of gaining working experience. The vast majority sees the move to Japan as an investment in human capital, as the experience of studying and/or working in Japan will improve their chances on the Chinese job market upon return. In order to improve their career chances, most migrants therefore accept separation from their families and friends; most initially dislike living in Japan, therefore compromising in realms of family and lifestyle preferences in order to achieve career goals.²⁵⁷ Different triggers, either the end of a set time frame (that is usually measured by career achievement such as being awarded a degree, getting a promotion) or events related to the agent's working or family life but also external events can lead to the situation assessment in the career sphere. Migrants will look at whether they have achieved their set goals or whether their occupational circumstances are compatible with changing priorities, for example, during life phase transitions.

Career goals differ individually and include getting into and graduating from prestigious universities, high salaries, working in a team of co-workers with whom the agent gets along well, relaxed working environments, flexibility of working hours, upward mobility²⁵⁸ or working in a management/leading position, working for the market leader or founding an own company, being acknowledged in one's working life,²⁵⁹ being able to apply all of one's skills etc. Depending on the point in the career- and family-related life course, these goals differ in importance and specificity. While students may be willing to compromise in their salaries or

²⁵⁷ They see temporary suffering not only as an investment but also as a rite of passage for a better future. To them, being in Japan is an anomalous situation especially in the early phases of migration.

²⁵⁸ The importance of upward mobility and the perception that this is hard for foreigners is exemplified by the following quote of a male worker in the finance industry, who returned to China after 12 years in Japan: "If you are in Japan, no matter how hard you try, there is a limit, you can only proceed to a certain point. I thought I would be happier returning, and I wanted a new challenge. I took a vacation and went to China to find a job and got introduced to this company. I worked for Japanese banks, so the salary is good. I thought I would move up through moving to China within the company, but it turns out it is still as slow. I now work as a consultant" (interview No. 101).

²⁵⁹ Many participants cited a lack of acknowledgment for their hard work and various skills in Japanese companies. One example is a male worker from the finance industry who cited discrimination as one of the reasons why he wanted to return to China.

Q: "What kind of discrimination are you referring to?"

A: "It is hard to say [*bimyo desu ne*]. Really, [...] as a Chinese, you are not trusted [*shinrai*]. That is certain... for Chinese, who work in Japan, we all feel like that, I think. We are not trusted. We do work as we are told. For Chinese, the thinking and the way of doing it... [compared to] Japanese companies, it is different. [...] as I said, the Japanese... they cannot confide in me. For western countries, I don't know, but.. certainly, more than [...] Japan, they should be a little more open. [...] What is always said about Japan, it is not about the result, it is about the process. In Japan, the top [management], somehow, they are all Japanese, towards foreigners, they don't really hire them, I think that is a strong phenomenon" (interview No. 83).

working environment when starting out on the labor market, with more experience and knowledge of others' salaries and working conditions, expectations may rise and the willingness to compromise diminish.²⁶⁰

Triggered by the end of a set time frame or an event, an agent assesses his current situation in the career, but also the spheres of family and lifestyle preferences. He compares his current situation to the goals enumerated above. If he is dissatisfied, he moves on to the next phase of problem definition. If he has reached his initial goal, he moves on to the next phase of defining new goals.²⁶¹

Family

Various events can lead to a situation assessment in the family sphere. At the end of a set time frame for migration that usually serves the purpose to increase career chances, agents may look at their levels of satisfaction with their family lives. This or an event from the career sphere, such as a promotion, may incline the agent to assess whether he is placing enough importance on and investing enough time in his family life. An event from family life such as child birth may incline him to assess whether he has created good enough circumstances to fulfill the role as a subjectively "good" parent. Contents of situation assessment are therefore levels of satisfaction with the fulfillment of his responsibilities towards his family members and his relationship with them as well as his subjective degree of happiness in the relationship with parents, spouse and children.

Chinese culture places much emphasis on the norm of filial piety, therefore, especially in the case of single children, parents' opinions and care needs and other

²⁶⁰ A female worker from the finance industry, who has been in Japan for 12 years (she came to Japan because of her parents who still reside in Japan), alludes to how goals shift in the life course: "In my life now, work is very important. In my life, there is nothing bothering me, but... [...] I think, if I didn't work, or had been in a different company, I wouldn't be as happy in my life as I am now. [...] I think, I am trying hard, I need to try hard at work, yes. So... in my life now, what is important is work. Yes. If you have a job, you can live on your own. Yes."

Q: "You also said you wanted a family?"

A: "I do, and I want to get married, but I need money first. Yes. Having my own family and keeping working, I want to live here, until I retire. And with the money I will have a small house in Okinawa and go back and forth between China and Japan" (interview No. 28).

Another quote of a female business student in a similar situation (entered Japan because of her parents who still reside there, length of stay is 13 years) echoes this: "My life now, my goal is... well... in the future, my life... I want to be able to live. I want to grow. I want to have skills, I want to use them, that is my goal, I think. In my future... if I am married, then for my family, I want them all to be happy, as I am an only child, in the future, I will have to take care of my parents. I need to work for that. Probably that is the thinking of us Chinese. Like that. So what is my goal in life? Now it is finding a job, I want to be able to find a job, that is what I am fighting for. To be able to grow" (interview No. 20).

²⁶¹ The new goal is not necessarily from the same sphere, for example, if a migrant had set the goal of reaching a certain position in the company hierarchy before forming a family. In this case, the next larger career goal is likely to be set for the time at which a child enters school. Due to still largely separated spheres of tasks in the household by gender, women are more likely to compromise in the career realm, if only for a limited time.

factors that lead to the self-ascription of being a “good child” are often important to the migrant. If the agent is in a relationship, he will assess his degree of happiness in the relationship and whether he is meeting his standards of “being a good spouse,” including exo-factors such as the partner’s satisfaction in the spheres of career, family or lifestyle preferences.²⁶² Both in the relationship with the spouse and children, he will assess whether he is spending enough time with them, providing for his family, and meeting their needs as well as possible (by providing good education, for example). In this sphere, situation assessment is very subjective, yet still influenced by social norms, therefore agents also assess whether their family life is as it should be.²⁶³ Goals in the family sphere are in an almost classic conflict with career goals, complicating the stage of option evaluation (Section 5.2) when agents try to combine goals from and increase levels of satisfaction in several spheres.²⁶⁴ If an agent’s assessment of his family situation is negative, he will define what exactly the root of dissatisfaction is. If it is positive, he will move on to the phase of defining new goals.

²⁶² Exo-factors refer to the influence of environments external to the agent through his immediate network contracts, such as the spouse (Voydanoff 2008: 38). The impact of this type of factors is exemplified by the case of the only couple that was interviewed for this study. They negotiated a time frame for living in Japan. She entered the PhD program of a top tier university and he came to Japan once he found a job that did not require Japanese language skills. He feels unhappy with his job as he cannot use all of his skills there, but could not find a better job without the sufficient cultural and language skills. This puts him at risk of deskilling and worsened career chances even upon return. Once she gets her degree, they are planning on returning to China. For her, therefore, his negative attitude towards living in Japan any longer than necessary shapes her situation assessment and, in the next steps, the options available to her without jeopardizing her relationship.

Similar situations exist for migrants who negotiated a limited time frame abroad with the spouse they left behind or parents dependent on the agent.

²⁶³ One classic point in time at which agents assess whether they are “on track” is their 30th birthday; migrants themselves or their networks contacts use this point in time to inquire whether the migrant is intending to marry or have children.

²⁶⁴ A female student’s quote, who is enrolled in social science major and was recruited at a job hunting event, shows how torn migrants can be between their goals of being good family members and successful workers:

Q: “How long to you want to live in Japan?”

A: “... how to say... I have lived here for 2.5 years, so maybe another 1.5 years? But every year, things are changing, I change. When I first came, I didn’t know anything, I had no job, but now I have many friends, and through my own strength I built this life, so... If I stay longer, I can have an even better life. But... for example, in terms of marriage and work, and family, if I think about it, I don’t know how to go on. That is life. Heaven will decide. [...]”

Q: “What is important to you?”

A: “... what is it... I don’t know that, that is why... maybe if... my family, my boyfriend... they tell me to return, live with my family, get married to my boyfriend, that I can be happy with, but at that time, myself... if I keep trying hard in Tokyo, I can get into a good company, get good pay, get positions, I don’t know what to look at. It is a life decision, it is hard” (interview No. 14).

Lifestyle Preferences

It is especially at the end of a set time frame of migration that agents assess their satisfaction in the sphere of lifestyle preferences.²⁶⁵ As migration is a tool to achieve goals (usually in this sample career goals, but agents have chosen *Japan* as a destination for specific reason), agents will look at whether they are living according to their lifestyle preferences. Especially when the intended point of return draws near, an agent looks at the degree to which he enjoys his life *in Japan*. If the event that triggers the phase of situation assessment does not imply relocation, participants look at the following areas of life: feelings of integration into social networks, level of self-determination and political convictions. Other goals from this sphere that agents enumerated were rather fuzzy, such as leading happy, international or independent lives, evolving personally, giving back to the community, and self-actualization.²⁶⁶ Another factor was being able to live freely, although definitions of freedom diverged.²⁶⁷ The assessment in this sphere is often negative, especially in the early phases of migration; migrants compromise in the sphere of lifestyle preferences in order to achieve larger life goals in the spheres of family and career; however, with life phase transitions, satisfaction in the sphere of lifestyle preferences may gain in importance.

5.1.2.2 Problem Definition and Framing/Defining New Goals

In regular decision-making processes (Type A as opposed to Type B decisions²⁶⁸), an agent enters either the phase of problem definition and framing or the phase of defining new goals after completing his situation assessment. This second phase of the decision-making process is directly influenced by the previous one in that the decision-making process splits: if situation assessment was positive, an agent will go on to set new goals (even if it is just to keep the status quo), but if he is dissatisfied with areas of his life, he will move on to identify one or more

²⁶⁵ Other events that may lead to a situation assessment in the field of lifestyle preferences may be career- or family-related events, as those may inhibit levels of self-determination or, on the contrary, open up opportunities to invest in hobbies.

²⁶⁶ A female student in a social science major who had gained working experience in China before coming to Japan for her master's degree explains: "I am a very idealist[ic] person. My dream is to... I want to be [...] successful [in my career] and pursue a career which is not only [about] making profit and [improving] my life but also [about contributing] to the country a little bit. And I want to have a balanced life, have a balance, be responsible to my parents, to my future family and at peace with myself with the world" (interview No. 3).

²⁶⁷ The definitions of freedom varied greatly (see Section 5.2.2.2); some felt unfree in Japan due to strict social rules, others in China due to a different kind of social control.

²⁶⁸ An agent skips the phase of problem definition and framing or of setting new goals if he perceives an unexpected event to create time pressure to act; in that case, he seeks solutions to a problem based on his mental image (Burns 2005: 17), an evolving representation of the problem's impact on his life.

problems, to which he will seek solutions in the subsequent phases. It is likely that the problem identified lies in the same sphere on which the situation assessment focused, but many problems an agent seeks to solve affect various areas of life.²⁶⁹ The way an agent frames a problem influences which options he considers to solve it: in the case of return migration, the problem needs to be framed as connected to living in Japan. If a migrant is satisfied with his situation assessment, he will set new goals. New goals are also likely to be set in the field in which the initial goal was met (for example, new career goals), but depending on the life phase, having reached a goal in another sphere may be the trigger to actively pursue goals from other areas of life.²⁷⁰ This section zooms in on problem definition and framing, followed by the alternative phase of defining new goals.

Problem Definition and Framing

If situation assessment was negative, in this second phase of the decision-making process an agent further investigates and precisely defines the problem(s) underlying his dissatisfaction. He needs to reduce the complexity of the interplay of various factors that shape his situation in order to identify the root of his dissatisfaction; however, depending on the time frame and the perception of his situation, an agent will possibly only identify symptoms of the underlying problems and seek to solve these symptoms. Imprecise problem definition may be the result of insufficient or overabundant information and the failure to sort it through thoroughly to identify the underlying problem(s) (March 1994: 10).²⁷¹ In the next conceptual step, an agent frames the problem; although problem definition and framing happen at the same time, the framing of a problem influences the solutions an agent considers in the next stage of option evaluation. For this reason, framing is treated separately in the context of this study. Depending on the agent's perception of his ability and the necessity to solve the problem, he will either form the intention to change his situation, thereby entering the next stage of option evaluation, or he will abort the decision-making process.

²⁶⁹ One example is if unhappiness with an agent's working situation spills over into his private life, while changes in his family life (such as child birth) may affect his goals and demands for his working environment (work–family negative spill-over, see Shimada *et al.* 2010: 335–336; Suzuki 2007: 14).

²⁷⁰ One example is that only after reaching a certain point in the career, a migrant considers having children, following a general pattern of highly skilled women who tend to have children later in life (Adda, Dustman and Stevens 2011).

²⁷¹ Strategies to reduce complexity or to deal with information constraints include ignoring parts of a problem, categorizing beliefs or stereotyping, using experience to fill in gaps in information or inferring intent on observed behavior (March 1994: 11).

The starting point of problem definition is dissatisfaction with one or more areas of an agent's life. Problems are probably ill-structured and multi-faceted, as has been pointed out by NDM scholars.²⁷² This section first looks at the process of problem definition and then zooms in on the contents of identified problems. Problem definition is prone to error, as agents may not conduct problem definition thoroughly enough or err in the identification of the root of the underlying problem leading to dissatisfaction.²⁷³ This, in addition to the framing of the problem, has strong implications for the stage of option evaluation; if options to solve the identified problem only superficially address the issues of an agent, he is likely to remain dissatisfied.²⁷⁴

Agents arrive at the "central" problem(s) underlying their negative situation assessment with various strategies and within different time frames. March (1994: 12–15) identified the following simplification processes for information processing and problem solving: editing, decomposition, heuristics and framing. Editing refers to a process of collecting a small number of cues surrounding a problem and combining them to identify the underlying problem.²⁷⁵ Decomposition means that complex problems are reduced to smaller-size problems that are easier to solve (see also Huber 1982: 113). The logic behind this is that the solution to a number of smaller-size problems will lead to an improvement of the complex larger-size problem. Heuristics denotes a strategy in which the decision maker matches solutions to familiar situations, often observed in expert decision-making (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 334–335). March's (1994: 14) definition of framing is that problems are approached with a particular angle, such as minimizing the damage to one's earnings if one is discontent with one's working situation or seeking a new challenge. In the sections below, "framing" is understood differently; it refers to an agent's contextualization of a previously defined problem.²⁷⁶ A number of strategies to reduce the complexity of problems

²⁷² In fact, whether it is in the lab with fictitious problems and or in their daily lives, agents only understand parts of the problem and subjectively structure and represent a problem (Huber 1982: 82).

²⁷³ As March (1994: 11) points out, decision-makers tend to simplify problems, fill in missing information based on convictions (see also Huber 1982: 82), and overlook information crucial to the problem because they only see what they expect to see, to name but a few potential sources of error.

²⁷⁴ In the context of highly skilled migration, this could mean that although problems are not related to living in Japan and could be solved with small changes of behavior on the part of the agent, a failure to correctly identify the underlying issue and alter behavior accordingly leads to larger levels of frustration and agents considering bigger changes in their lives, such as relocation (or divorce, job switches etc. in other contexts).

²⁷⁵ This is especially likely to happen if an agent is short on time or has a fixed idea of a general situation; when confronted with cues, he immediately sees this image confirmed. With this strategy, cues disconfirming an agent's expectations or pre-set images are ignored.

²⁷⁶ One example for the possibility that the same problem can be framed in multiple ways is sudden unemployment. Although "losing one's job" affects all areas of life in that income decreases affect family and leisure time activities, and timely resources are freed to spend on family or hobbies, an agent is more likely to frame unemployment as a problem in the career sphere. Other options are to

could be observed in the sample and are briefly touched upon, but as the focus of this study is on explaining return migration decisions, this chapter analyzes contents of problem definition as opposed to the process.²⁷⁷

The following paragraphs present problems identified by migrants structured by the reasons agents deemed crucial for their return considerations: career, family and lifestyle preferences. As previously pointed out, the type of event that triggers a phase of situation assessment is crucial for processes and contents of problem definition. The end of a set time frame for life in Japan is likely to lead to a situation assessment in all areas of life and a review of whether agents reached their goals; in this phase of problem definition, they analyze the reasons why they failed to achieve them or why they remain dissatisfied. In this context, agents are likely to look at factors that lead to dissatisfaction *in Japan*. Other events, in contrast, such as being passed over for a promotion, must not necessarily lead to the agent seeing the underlying problem as connected to Japan. Agents identified many problems that bothered them in their daily lives; however, not all were or could be solved by moving.

Table 5.7: Reasons for Settlement or Return, SRQ²⁷⁸

	decided to stay in Japan	living in Japan, considering migration	returned to China	total
family	4	15	10	29
career	1	18	21	40
family & career	3	13	10	26
lifestyle preferences	2	11	-	13
3/11	-	1	2	3
no answer	-	1	-	1
total	10	59	43	112

compiled by the author.

rely on the spouse’s income, take time off to fulfill life dreams in the lifestyle preferences realm etc. However, agents in the sample are more likely to look for other career opportunities in Japan or China.²⁷⁷ Only little information was sought in the interviews about how agents processed information to arrive at problem definition. Although this process is prone to error, what is decisive in explaining the outcome is the perception of problems and of suitable solutions to these problems. Due to issues of interview design, therefore, processes of problem definition cannot be directly derived; in semi-structured interviews, agents reflected on their decision-making processes. Usually, think-aloud protocols are used to reconstruct problem-solving strategies. Due to the nature of return migration decisions which are complex and time-consuming, this study relies on agents’ depictions and memories of decision-making processes and contents and their ex post facto evaluation of their decisions (see Section 3.6).

²⁷⁸ The category of “family” includes all factors related to spouse, parents and children, “career” refers to agents’ perceptions of the quality of their careers in Japan and China, “lifestyle preferences” comprise the wish for adventure or an independent life and preferences for life in Japan or China.

Table 5.7 presents the reason that agents deemed crucial in their locational decisions. Career was by far the most cited reason and is therefore presented first. As most migrants went to Japan to increase career chances, it is likely that they assess levels of goal achievement in that sphere at the end of a set time frame. Goals to achieve in the career sphere within the set time frame of living in Japan include acceptance into and a degree from prestigious universities, high salaries, reaching a certain stage in the company hierarchy or a set time frame of working experience in a specific company such as the market leader. Migration is a tool to reach these goals and to prepare the agent for a successful career.²⁷⁹ In the absence of a set time frame or if the trigger is a different event, an agent will assess his general level of satisfaction with his career. Criteria for a “good” working life included challenging contents, the ability to use several or all of one’s skills as well as to develop new skills, high salaries, upward mobility, a good atmosphere among co-workers and work–life balance etc.²⁸⁰ In the phase of problem definition, agents more closely define the specific problem underlying their dissatisfaction. In the next phase of problem framing, they look at the exterior circumstances causing the problem.

The problems most often cited from the career sphere as influential in relocation decisions (as opposed to general problems in the career sphere)²⁸¹ are dislike of Japanese working styles (n=32), no/little upward occupational mobility (n=31),²⁸² bad career chances for women (n=6) and the inability to find employment or get a licensed for one’s profession (n=6).²⁸³ Agents could enumerate a number of issues (multiple response question, MRQ). In explaining why they were dissatisfied with the career sphere in Japan and how this influenced their locational decisions, more than 25% of the sample (a third when excluding

²⁷⁹ Agents may find that although they had reached the initial instrumental goal of migration (a degree, for example), a reassessment of their current situation leads to the perception that the first (and originally only) step is not enough to reach the larger goal of a “good” career in China. Agents therefore may prolong their stay in Japan to gain working experience. One female engineering student, who had spent 6 years in Japan at the time of the interview, explains: “Not only studying abroad, but also working experience in Japan, if you have that, it will be beneficial. Just being here won’t do much good” (interview No. 16).

²⁸⁰ Participants most often mentioned being able to utilize all skills (35 codes in MaxQDA), followed by challenging work contents (32). Codes for the rest of the enumerated factors were given on average 12 times for answers to the question of what was important to participants in their working lives.

²⁸¹ Other roots of dissatisfaction that bothered participants, but that they did not consider crucial for relocation decisions, included complaints about low basic salaries, lack of work–life balance and too much routine in tasks and procedures.

²⁸² This includes the codes “lack of upward mobility in Japan,” “career speed in Japan too slow” and “bad chances for foreigners in the Japanese economy.” Another five participants not included in this category cited general dissatisfaction with their job as reasons to consider return. That reason belongs to a different category because it is not framed as connected to Japan but to a specific work place.

²⁸³ For these participants, the lack of employment was the reason to return. One participant could not get a license to practice medicine in Japan after studying, and therefore returned. One other that is not included here, lost his job and returned.

those who decided to stay in Japan) stated that they disliked the way Japanese work. This refers to strict hierarchies, a serious and busy [*majime*] atmosphere at the work place and a lot of overtime,²⁸⁴ but also the feeling that career speed was slow or upward mobility limited especially for foreigners,²⁸⁵ even more so for foreign women. Some expressed that they could not use their skills when they worked in Japan, a factor that has been identified by Luo (2003: 300) as crucial in return decisions.²⁸⁶ Both men and women echoed the evaluation that women had trouble building successful careers in Japan.²⁸⁷ However, this understanding of

²⁸⁴ A male employee in his thirties of a Japanese company in the finance industry, who returned to China after 11 years in Japan in 2009 but remained in the same company as in Japan, explains as an answer to the question whether he wanted to return: “Yes, I wanted to go back, my parents are here, it is close to [place where parents live, 700 km away from Beijing], at least closer than Japan, also the food, and the work [is closer to my preferences], I had worked in Japan for five years, I hadn’t worked in a Chinese company, and my image of working in a company in China was different, I think working in China is more fun [*raku*]. In Japan the hierarchies are a lot stricter, for foreigners... well... I get tired. In China people make more jokes, it’s easier to talk to people” (interview No. 104).

²⁸⁵ Luo (2003: 300) specifically refers to “respect and responsibility” as factors influential in return migration decisions, as highly skilled look for challenging contents and want to be valued for their work. A male employee of a Japanese company in the finance industry, who switched jobs within the same company after having lived in Japan for 13 years, explains his experience in Japan as follows: “[I had been offered a job in Shanghai by my Japanese company and it was] for the job I returned, and I had also wanted to return. Working in Japan [...] How to say... it is boring, working in Japan. To put it directly. You feel blocked, almost imprisoned, and [in the subsidiary in] China as well, the good thing about [working in] Japan is that people stick to the rules, have manners, they work that way, and the way to deal with each other... they stick to rules and manners, work like that, but Chinese only stick to the rules sporadically. As I am Chinese, when I returned, when there is discrimination, I don’t really feel it, but when I was in Japan, somehow I did feel like there was something, and I couldn’t move up as much in society” (interview No. 83).

²⁸⁶ Luo (1999, cited in Luo 2003: 300) found in a survey on skilled return migrants to Shanghai that their primary motivation was to “give full play to their professional knowledge and skills.”

²⁸⁷ A female entrepreneur, who had worked in a Japanese company before starting her own and who had lived in Japan for 17 years at the time of the interview, explains “No, I was with an electric company, but they don’t promote foreigners or women. I used to be with [a Japanese company], but they don’t promote us, it has to do with education. It is a traditional old company, so maybe I was just unlucky, but...” (interview No. 74).

Another male participant who volunteered to work for his Japanese employer in China but left his family in Japan (a pattern also observed by Iredale, Guo and Rozario (2003: 20) and Yang (2013: 132)), explains: “My child lives in Japan, he was born there, but... usually [...] the kindergarten works until 7 [p.m.], but in Japan, that is still really early for a company, you cannot leave at that time. Recently policy changed, fathers are told to go home early, but... you still need to get the work done. In that environment, of course, my wife, the wives don’t work, they stay home, and raise children as their main work, but... that... it is correct, it is ok, all right, but... how should you feel about it? China is developing and the women work. Women are half of the sky. *Funü neng ding banbiantian*. Women hold up half of the sky, that is the Chinese women, but for equality of the sexes, in the society outside, the social problems... [...] in Japan, women have their own circles. That small world. Men have their own world. It is hard to start an exchange. That is a problem. Women graduate from university, enter a good company and work, but then retract from that part of society and do other things. Is that a good thing? I don’t approve of it. Of course, they are free to do so, but in Japan, the system, also the workplace [encourages or forces it]...” (interview No. 88).

how the Japanese career system works and the limitations it presents to foreigners can be the result not of own experiences, but of hearsay and prejudice;²⁸⁸ decisions built on this representation of a problem are therefore classic examples of limited rationality, specifically, of agents' dealings with information constraints (Huber 1982: 82; March 1994: 11). Problems defined may differ by life phase and also gender, in addition to occupation.

In looking at the spheres of reasons agents denoted crucial for locational decisions, career was the most often cited reason, however, a combination of family and career factors was cited by 26 agents (23%) and pure family reasons for 29 participants (26%). Migration for participants of the study is not necessarily an instrumental tool to improve family life,²⁸⁹ as it usually separates agents from their families. Agents accept temporary separation from their families in order to achieve career goals; at the end of a set time frame, however, they usually plan to better fulfill their roles as son or daughter, settle down and be a "good" spouse or parent. Other expected or unexpected events such as childbirth or sudden illness of a family member lead to an assessment of whether the agent satisfactorily fulfills these goals. What constitutes goal achievement, that is, how agents define being a good child/spouse/parent is influenced by norms²⁹⁰ and depends on life phase.²⁹¹ Instrumental goals to achieve these abstract goals of role fulfillment include financial and emotional care of one's family, acting according to their wishes, spending time with and providing a safe environment for one's family as well as investing in good education for children. In the phase of problem definition after negative situation assessment in the family sphere, agents identified the following problems that influence relocation decisions: most often mentioned were care needs of parents (in the future, $n=34$, vs. acute care needs, $n=4$), parental pressure to return ($n=23$), the wish to be close to family ($n=23$), children's education ($n=21$),²⁹² the spouse's wish to return ($n=14$) and worries about the

Despite the widely-held prejudice that women had trouble building a career in Japan, Chinese women tend to occupy niches which provide them with the opportunity to have better careers than Japanese women (Liu-Farrer 2009c), and they employ various strategies to escape career hold-ups, including self-employment, job switches etc. (Achenbach 2014).

²⁸⁸ A male employee of a Japanese company from the finance industry in his 30s who had stayed in Japan for 6 years returned in 2006 without working experience. When explaining why he chose not to apply for jobs in Japan, he states "At that time, I... I hadn't thought about going to work, I hadn't done job hunting, I just returned to China. I didn't do it at all. Japan... towards foreigners... at that time, I didn't really think about anything, I just wanted to return fast, take the degree. And then return to China, to work" (interview No. 106).

²⁸⁹ Agents may, however, seek good careers and salaries in order to be able to provide for spouse, children and parents.

²⁹⁰ Norms that influence an agent's understanding of what constitutes a good child, spouse or parent are, among others, gender-role ideology and social norms such as filial piety (see Achenbach 2014 for the influence of these on Chinese highly skilled women's strategies to achieve work-family balance).

²⁹¹ Family size also plays a role, because the ability to rely on siblings to take care of elderly parents, for example, may relax responsibilities and criteria for being a "good" child.

²⁹² Two of these preferred the Japanese educational system and had decided to stay in Japan.

effects of radiation on children (n=6). In most cases, the underlying reason for dissatisfaction therefore lies in separation from one's family, yet why this bothers the agent and leads to a reevaluation of his locational decisions can be broken down into his own wish to be close to his immediate and extended family in China,²⁹³ and parental or spousal pressure. Generally, a migrant may identify problems related to his parents, his spouse or children in the family sphere. Parents were mentioned 48 times as "problems" influential in return migration decisions (multiple responses possible). This reflects the still strong social and cultural norm of filial piety in addition to pointing out the lack of social security and welfare systems in China.²⁹⁴ Migrants who cannot rely on siblings or other relatives to take care of their parents in old age either take this responsibility into consideration when moving to Japan and plan their length of stay accordingly, while others think to return for only a limited amount of time. In the sample, 76 agents cited to plan on taking care of their parents in old age.²⁹⁵ In the case of sudden illness of a parent, this responsibility may well be the decisive problem that leads to return movement, but migrants also have other options (such as returning for a limited amount of time, bringing parents to Japan for short-term medical treatment etc.).²⁹⁶

Migration-induced separation must not always be the underlying "problem" of negative situation assessment in the family sphere; other problems include spousal pressure to return, how to best provide good education for one's children, and a perception of danger to family health after 3/11. Exo-level factors, for example, if the spouse becomes unemployed and wishes to return in pursuit of a new job, affect decision-making processes in that these development present danger to family income and unity. In the cases in which migrants cited the spouse's wish to return to China for any number of reasons, the interviewees were overwhelmingly women.²⁹⁷ Many of the female interviewees married to a Chinese

²⁹³ The wish to be close to family has been pointed out by Siew-Ean Khoo and Anita Mak (2000: 1), who, in the case of return migration from Australia, cite studies from the 1960s that point to migrants' homesickness and wish to be close to friends and family (as well as low levels of adjustment).

²⁹⁴ See Section 5.2 on the influence of agents' responsibilities towards parents on option evaluation.

²⁹⁵ The remaining 36 agents who do not take this factor into consideration consist of 7 participants whose parents already passed away, one who has a bad relationship with them, and 28 who can rely on siblings to take care of their parents. Of the 89 participants who answered the question of whether parents expected them to return, 45 (about 50%) stated that they received some sort of pressure from their parents: 25 expect the participants to return in the future (16 explicitly to provide take care), six urgently pressure the participant to return as soon as possible and 14 at least in the near future. See Section 5.2.2.2 on perceptions of behavioral control in the social sphere.

²⁹⁶ See Chapter 6 on the influence of these factors for various groups of participants on return migration decisions.

²⁹⁷ Only in one of the cases, the wife pushed for return: a student in an IT master's program explained he felt strong pressure both from his wife to return but was also suffering from the many responsibilities he had in Japan. He had met his wife in Japan, but "she wanted to return, she was really stressed in Japan, so she wanted to return to China, so I stayed in Japan by myself and when I graduate we will be together... [...] I can see the future, but I cannot really see it. The reason is, now... I am not working yet, so I cannot live a stable life. I am a bit scared because of that, of many things, so... my wife, she

explained that their husbands disliked living in Japan and preferred returning and that this wish intensified after the birth of children.²⁹⁸ Children's education is an important issue for migrants and one that influences the decisions about where to best raise the child.²⁹⁹ Many interviewees in a relationship with other Chinese explained that children's national identities and competitive abilities could be better (or correctly) developed only in China.³⁰⁰

Relocation decisions affect all areas of life and cannot always be traced back to a single problem that is solved by return migration; especially problems from the family sphere (more so if not acute) may form part of ill-structured problems and the feelings of responsibility towards family (in China) may shape or strengthen a migrant's favorable attitude towards moving. This point is strengthened by the fact that 26 participants could not pinpoint their reasons for return to a single sphere but expressed that a combination of career and family was decisive in their locational decisions.

is also not working, so... money, money, money, I cannot see the future, but it is my duty, so... I have a strong responsibility" (interview No. 7). He returned after graduation because of his wife's pressure and his perception of better career chances in China.

²⁹⁸ A female doctoral student, who is currently separated from her child due to worries about radiation from atomic reactors in Fukushima and who is planning on returning once she has been awarded her doctoral degree, explains that she had planned on returning even before the nuclear crisis, in part because: "Also we think of our child's education, my husband wants our child not to receive only Japanese education, because children here are well educated, but once you separate them from Japan, they are weak. Here they are too local, not international, it is an island, one people [*minzoku wa hitotsu*], it is difficult to enter the international system" (interview No. 64).

²⁹⁹ A male employee of a Japanese financial company who has lived in Japan for 22 years at the time of the interview addresses the problem as follows:

"Yes, [my children went to] Japanese schools, well... that is also difficult, maybe, now the Chinese in Japan, all the foreigners in Japan, what they suffer from is how to raise their kids: in China, or put them in Chinese schools in Japan, they suffer because of that, but in my case, because we live here I thought it would be better if they built their base in Japan, so they are in school here. They basically only use Japanese, but they can speak Chinese. [...] I think the education in Japan is not really good, I am unhappy with that, in China the education is better, but there is a big gap to Japan, and in elementary school [...], schools don't encourage competition. To which degree is weird, for example, at the school there is a sports fest once a year. They run in groups, not individually. If they don't have competition, they can't be successful. I think that also affects the economy. If you receive normal education, it is hard to enter the best schools. Schools only teach the most basic things. You need to go to *juku* [after-school lessons] to study more. So that policy, people who have money can move up, people without it can't. So I think the Japanese system is weird. [...] But the kids still complain to their parents. The level of education is way too low."

³⁰⁰ Some Chinese women married to Japanese men echoed that they believed the Japanese educational system was too soft on the children in terms of teaching competitive abilities, but also the quality of education in subjects such as math and English were better in China. However, for them sending the child to China or moving with the child for a limited amount of time met with strong opposition of the Japanese husband. (This does not mean that it is impossible for Chinese women in binational marriages to return to China with the child for his education, but women for whom this is true are not included in the sample of this study; the number of women included in the sample interviewed in China is very small and, due to the heavy reliance on snowball sampling in 2012, unlikely to depict accurately all types of living arrangements of (temporary) returnees.)

A comparatively low number of 13 participants explained that lifestyle preferences were crucial in their locational decisions (2 decided to stay in Japan, none returned for reasons of lifestyle preference). More than in other spheres, agents are willing to compromise in the sphere of lifestyle preferences in order to achieve career or family goals; however, at the end of a set time frame or if events open up the opportunity to focus on lifestyle preferences, agents will consider whether they are feeling well-integrated into social networks, at levels of self-determination or freedom and political or religious convictions. Interviewees did have a long list of problems from the sphere of lifestyle preferences when talking about their lives in Japan and China and factors that influence their locational decisions, yet these were not decisive “problems” for return.³⁰¹ They do, however, shape general attitudes towards staying or returning. The most often mentioned factors from the spheres of lifestyle preferences that influence migration decisions are feelings of loneliness and not being well-integrated (n=27), feeling discriminated against (n=23), “cold” social relations in Japan (n=22), too much social pressure in Japan (n=21), feeling bored/having had enough of Japan (n=14) and experiencing life in Japan as too hard (n=12). These problems are almost all directly related to Japan, yet they probably do not constitute the decisive problem that leads to moving. Many interviewees complained about social distance and feelings of loneliness, not only at the beginning of their stays in Japan.³⁰² In these descriptions, interviewees mostly directly compare the norms of social exchange with China.³⁰³ Often, feelings of loneliness, discrimination and social distance all come together to create a feeling of not belonging. After a while, migrants may

³⁰¹ MaxQDA codes about complaints about the daily life in Japan included high prices in Japan (41), difficulties to get close to Japanese (47) or general problems with Japanese social interactions (60).

³⁰² In an interview with a female employee, who only reluctantly returned to China to care for her ageing mother, she expresses the following problems with living in Japan: “At the beginning... the culture, how to say, outside culture could not really get in [to Japanese culture], outside people. Even if you enter, still, the thinking is different. I would go to the meetings of my *mansion* [apartment building], and people are polite, because I am a woman... but they know I am a foreigner. They feel it. They know I am not from the inside circle. If you are Japanese and I am a foreigner, of course, you use polite language, but I am not really a person. You understand? It is different for younger people, but for older people, it gets tough. There is a wall. A wall you cannot see. It always goes up to a certain point, but you cannot enter. With [the Chinese friend who introduced the author to this participant] I can talk about anything, but with my numerous Japanese friends, I cannot really talk about everything. In Japanese culture, there are things you don’t talk about. They are *meiwaku* [a nuisance] for the other person. So it is ok, but up to a certain point only” (interview No. 108).

³⁰³ A female business student, who had been to Japan for three years, compares Chinese and Japanese ways of social interaction: “at the very beginning, on the train, people don’t offer seats to elderly on the train. In China they do. If you don’t, people around you will. So when I first came, there was an elderly man, and I immediately got up, and people around me were really surprised. I often experienced this. I thought Japanese people were really cold. Japanese people are really cold when they are supposed to be warm, but when it is about unimportant things and you don’t have to be polite, they are really warm. For example, in department stores, in bathrooms, you don’t have to be so nice, you have to be nice in other situations, like offering your seat” (interview No. 41).

also feel the routine to become too much.³⁰⁴ This is sometimes connected to the often-cited feeling of severe social pressure to conform to the social rules.³⁰⁵

Zooming in on feelings of loneliness and problems with the Japanese way of social interaction, a closer look at the networks of Chinese included in the sample reveals that almost 40% declared they had mixed networks.³⁰⁶ When looking at the nationality of who interviewees felt close to, 64% said they felt closer to their Chinese network contacts.³⁰⁷ Some explained that it was simply hard for them to get close to Japanese because of cultural issues (from either side),³⁰⁸ while others explained that it was due to their own busy schedules. Especially students cited that they were exhausted from having to perform well in class and earn money (more than 75% of the sample has done *baito* [part-time work] in Japan),³⁰⁹

³⁰⁴ This is echoed by the quote of a male entrepreneur, who had spent 12 years in Japan before returning in 2005 and expressed: “One reason is that I have been with that company for six years, and I had wanted to start something new. And also, I had wanted to work with new people, in a new company, do new things, but have a new life. My life in China had changed, I wanted to sell new products [...] I wanted to do something new. [...] Even now that I am back for six years, I look at that time, what I thought back then, within myself, understanding it, I was in a difficult situation. The Japanese company was really safe, I was a *seishain*. There was no danger. But basically, I would go up a little each year. But for socialism, I thought China would be more socialist, I would better be able to bring in my knowledge. That was my feeling” (interview No. 91).

³⁰⁵ A male employee working in IT who had spent 7 years in Japan states: “Life is not inconvenient, but life is stiff. You can't speak loudly, you cannot laugh, at the company, there is nothing outside of work” (interview No. 76). Another participant, a female employee from IT, who has spent 20 years in Japan and taken on Japanese nationality, said “all the rules, you feel like choking, right? All the rules...” (interview No. 75). Or, when explaining what he best likes about China, one male entrepreneur from the finance industry (naturalized Japanese, returned to China in 2007 after 19 years in Japan) explains: “I can relax. In Japan, there are so many rules [*reigi*], they are so strict. When I go back, I think it is the most fun to not pay attention to *reigi*. Of course, there are areas where people should pay more attention, but all in all... I can do things my way” (interview No. 112).

However, many also expressed their admiration for the way “Japanese” follow social rules and thought Chinese society should learn from them; however, the degree of adherence to social rules felt odd to many Chinese.

³⁰⁶ Yet, 11% had only Chinese contacts and 31% mainly Chinese. Only 14% had mainly or only Japanese contacts.

³⁰⁷ 32% saw no difference in closeness, and roughly 4% felt closer to Japanese. When looking only at the nationality of close friends, Chinese were the closest friends in more than 50% of the sample.

³⁰⁸ Many said that they had trouble talking to Japanese deeply, as is exemplified in the following quote by a female employee in education, who had been in Japan for 21 years at the time of the interview:

Q: “Why are there so many Chinese in your network?”

A: “Really, I want to make a lot of friends, Japanese and Chinese, I want a balance, but becoming friends with Japanese is really difficult, very difficult. There are people I am close to, but people I call friends... The meaning is different. The relationship between people, from my perspective, we feel distant. [...] As I am Chinese... other people who aren't Chinese cannot understand that. You don't need to talk about it. It is not a problem of language, but a problem of the heart. People from the same country who live here, they can understand me.”

Q: “Do you still think so?”

A: “Yes. Yes, it is still difficult” (interview No. 52).

³⁰⁹ Most of the younger workers do not work as many hours as their predecessors in the 1980s and 1990s (see Liu-Farrer (2011: 64–75) for a description of students' part-time working lives), because

workers most often explained that they had to work a lot of overtime and that they got exhausted quickly because they did not enjoy the working atmosphere in Japanese companies. Some Chinese, who entered Japan after having gained working experience in China or received a degree from a prestigious university, had trouble adjusting to their lowered status when starting out again from zero in Japan (Liu-Farrer 2011: 70–72).³¹⁰

In conclusion, migrants enumerated a number of problems following negative situation assessment at the end of a set time frame or after an event that triggered a decision-making process. However, problem definition is prone to error as migrants may not carry out problem definition thoroughly and not all problems that migrants identified as bothering them in their daily lives in Japan are crucial to return migration decisions (see Chapter 6). Whether problems lead to the inclusion of return migration as a solution to these problems in the stage of option evaluation depends on the framing of problems.

At the point of problem framing, a migrant has already identified one or more problems that lead to dissatisfaction in one or more spheres of life. How he frames the problems decides about which options he considers to solve them and also whether he believes the problems to be solvable at all. Framing distinguishes between the problem that is affecting a migrant's individual life and what he sees as the circumstances creating that problem. This process is influenced by an agent's information, norms and perception of external factors, in short, his bias.³¹¹ Especially in cases of private problems that an agent seeks to solve, parents' or the spouse's strong opinion and pressure might influence an agent's framing.

One example of different ways of framing the same problem is the following: if a migrant is dissatisfied with his working life, specifically with a lack of upward mobility, he could see this as a problem within his team, his company, Japanese companies, any company in Japan, or his occupation in general. If it is a problem only within his team or company, in the next stage of option evaluation, he will be likely to think about switching companies or investing in further education to convince his employer to promote him. If he frames it as a characteristic of working life in Japan, he is more likely to consider relocation.³¹² Another problem

many receive financial assistance from their parents or receive scholarships. One participant who studied in Japan in the 1990s and returned to work in China after studying law in the U.S. remembers his daily routine as working from 2.30 at night till 7 am delivering newspapers, attending school, and working at a steel factory from 5 to 9 p.m.

³¹⁰ A female employee in the field of education, who had been in Japan for 21 years at the time of the interview, recounted the difficulties of finding an apartment during her studies, money troubles and different types of *baito*: "It was so hard, I really suffered! Until then, I was raised as an adult, in China, going to university, you are among the top 4%, I felt like an elite, we were treated well, and my life until then, it was all planned out. At *baito*, I got to see a different world" (interview No. 52).

³¹¹ As Tversky and Kahneman (1986: S257) put it: "Framing is controlled by the manner in which the choice problem is presented as well as by norms, habits, and expectancies of the decision maker."

³¹² A number of women voiced their conviction that it was harder for women to have a good career in Japan. However, the consequences of that realization differed. A female employee of a Chinese IT

that shows well how one issue can be framed in various ways is dissatisfaction with work–family balance; an agent may frame it as being related to an employer who is negligent of the employee’s personal life, as a characteristic of the Japanese labor market, as a problem of one’s child care provider or of the Japanese child care services system, or as a problem at home because the agent does not feel supported by the spouse. Options include negotiations with employer or spouse, switching employers, child care facilities, divorce or moving. How best to ensure “good” education for a child is a third example, in which it becomes clear that agents understand the same problem differently and therefore contemplate different options to solve that same problem. Many migrants expressed that they felt that Japanese education was inferior to Chinese education when it came to subjects such as math, but also in terms of competitive abilities of students. As this is a problem directly related to the Japanese system, migrants may choose to enroll their children in Chinese or other international schools in Japan, send the children back to China to boarding school or to live with grandparents, have one spouse migrate with the child or move back together as a family.³¹³ These examples show how crucial framing is to the evaluation of options, explored in Section 5.2.

The framing of a problem depends heavily on the information an agent has on the macro-level structures shaping his situation, including his perception of the

company recounts the following event at her old job in Japan: “As a Chinese, if you are a woman, the feeling is strong. I want to use my full potential, but because I am a woman, I am not allowed to. I once met the head of [Japanese company], and because I was a woman, I was the only one not to get his business card. I was really surprised. Just because I was a woman! This feeling is very strong” (interview No. 108). This experience did not lead her to reconsider her choice of living and working in Japan, but she felt it was part of Japanese culture. Other women in the sample, experiencing discrimination at the work place, chose to work at international companies or opted to found their own companies (see Achenbach 2014 for a more detailed account of women’s career strategies). Another female participant, who works for a Chinese bank explains that she does not intend to return to Japan, where she spent part of her childhood, although she considers going abroad to gain more working experience: “I will consider going to the U.S., because [it] is a financial center and I would like to work in the most advanced area there, but not to Canada, because there is not much commercial activity in Canada, and not to Japan, because I am female. [...] You know, when I do this job, the thing I am most proud of is that I work in the meeting room with some very famous Japanese company and all of [the company representatives] are male, and I am maybe the only female in the room, so [because of] that, I really appreciate my company and my country giving me that opportunity, in Japan, I will never get that chance” (interview No. 87).

³¹³ Philip Q. Yang (2013: 132) refers to these strategies as “modern-split families” (“astronauts”), “parachute-kid families” or “reverse parachute-kid families.” In the first case, one parent moves back to China while leaving spouse and children in the destination country. The second case refers to sending the children abroad for a good education while parents return to their country of origin and the latter case refers to sending the child to China to enroll in school there with grandparents taking care of the child.

economy and labor market in Japan,³¹⁴ visa policy,³¹⁵ education systems etc. Incomplete information may lead to flawed framing of underlying problems. Framing also depends on the strength of beliefs about the circumstances creating or influencing the identified problem underlying negative situation assessment—an agent could be willing to question and further investigate the macro-level structures shaping his life in Japan (e.g. visa policy), for example, if he generally enjoys living in Japan, which therefore could lead to considering different options than return migration to solve his various problems. Framing the problem as connected to living in Japan is not a sufficient condition for movement, yet in most cases, it is a necessary condition.

Definition of New Goals

An agent enters this phase if his situation assessment was positive; this may be the case after the end of a set time frame during which he has met his goals, or triggered by career- or family-related life phase transitions, which open up resources to reinvest in career, family or hobbies/lifestyle preferences. The agent must not set new goals in the same sphere in which he has achieved them; for example, a couple may decide to start a family after both have reached a certain point in their careers, while children leaving the house to study sets free resources to focus on other areas of life.³¹⁶

Specific goals for the stay in Japan usually include increasing one's human capital on which to cash in upon return to China or during an extended stay in Japan. An agent assesses his satisfaction with the career sphere not only after the end of a set time frame but also as a reaction to various events. Once his goal, however specified, is reached, an agent may set new goals in the same sphere: aim

³¹⁴ The majority of participants explained that the Japanese economy was stagnating or currently at a low-point (48 thought it was bad, 44 said it was stagnating and only 5 felt the Japanese economy was good). Compared to the Chinese economy, 86 thought it was good, one stagnating and 12 bad.

³¹⁵ Migrants may trace back the root of their problem to Japanese systemic factors such as the difficulty to get visas for parents when these are sick or when they could help with child care (under the new visa policy for highly skilled, these workers are allowed to bring in parents under certain conditions if they have a child under the age of three (Immigration Bureau of Japan 2013)).

³¹⁶ In the case of a divorced female employee of an international IT company who had been in Japan for almost all of her daughter's life (who studied in a traditional immigration country at the time of the interview), but left Japan in 2012, explained that she had stayed in Japan as long as she did to ensure a stable lifestyle for her daughter and also because she had enjoyed life in Japan. But once the daughter started university, it triggered a decision-making process about how to improve her career and how to enter a more stimulating social environment; after the interview, she chose to go to the U.S.: "I found a lot of women in America are more capable in [their] career[s], more career-oriented, strong personality, they stand out, but here, [...] Japan is a man's society and women are supposed to be, you know, a certain way, so there are not a lot of chances for women to have a career [...] when I was young that bothered me, but now I still regret, I have some regrets, to get stuck, to stay here too long. Sometimes I think I have more chances to divert myself, [...] to do more things, not just work for a company or something. Now [that my daughter is grown up] I can move a little bit, yes, and then the chance came [from my company to start a position in the U.S.]."

for more challenging contents, a higher position in the company hierarchy, founding his own company or increasing his work–life or work–family balance. March (1994: 33) also includes another option in this phase, if situation assessment (although he frames the process differently) was positive: increase slack, that is, not setting new goals but being satisfied with the status quo. In the sample, that logic is not absent; an agent may be satisfied and opt for a career strategy to keep up the status quo in the career sphere, but increase his efforts to reach satisfaction in the spheres of family or lifestyle preferences.³¹⁷

For any number of reasons, at the end of set time frame or after life phase transitions etc., agents assess their level of satisfaction in the spheres of not only career, but also family and lifestyle preferences. Whether a reconsideration of locational decisions (extending a stay, relocating within Japan or internationally or returning to China) forms part of the options to reach newly set goals depends in part on the trigger of the decision-making process; if it is the end of a set time frame, locational reconsiderations are almost always part of the options to reach goals.³¹⁸ In case of life phase transitions, the nature of the new goal and whether location impacts the ability of an agent to reach it (more quickly or easily) decides about the inclusion of changes in locational plans in the stage of option evaluation.³¹⁹ Both the phase of problem definition and framing and this phase of setting new goals usually lead to the stage of option evaluation, during which an agent simulates the impact of a number of options on his primary goals. Option evaluation is highly dependent on the specificity of newly set and primary goals and the agent's understanding of the circumstances influencing his situation.

³¹⁷ For example, if agents enjoy living in Japan, they may set the goal to further increase or keep up this situation by prolonging their stay (e.g. to avoid going back to their “real lives” as opposed to expat lives with less family responsibility) for a limited time frame or indefinitely. A female participant with a bachelor's degree in business studies from Chinese university, who was enrolled in language school at the time of the interview, explained: “I will be here until March next year, then I graduate. [After that...] I am thinking about that. Get a degree... I don't want to return to China. There is no result yet. If I return now, [the time spent in Japan] was a waste. So... I want to live here for some more time. I like it here, there is freedom, I am on my own, I am free. If I return to China, whether I will succeed, I don't know. [... My parents] are still young, not sick, but they will get older and my brother as well, he doesn't live close to my parents, and because I am the girl, the daughter, it is my duty, my responsibility [to take care of them]. I am scared of that. That is why now I need to do what I want to do. I need to be independent, work, make money, if I have a chance, bring my parents to Japan, go to other countries, have different foods, if I have a job, I can be independent” (interview No. 61). Other “new” goals after compromising in this area for a set time frame, include spending more time with family and friends, investing more time for hobbies etc.

³¹⁸ If agents have reached goals and are satisfied with their lives, the nature of the event “end of a set time frame” carries with it the connotation that at this point in time one's location is assessed for the potential of new goal achievement.

³¹⁹ If, for example, a promotion leads to the assessment of one's situation and the setting of new goals, the nature of these goals, e.g. spending more time with family, and an agent's perception of his surrounding shaping his situation, decides about whether locational reconsiderations form part of the options considered to reach the newly set goal. This thought process is presented in Section 5.2 on option evaluation, specifically the phase of “identification of options.”

5.1.2.3 Mental Image of Current State

An agent enters this phase of forming a mental image of his current state as opposed to the phase situation assessment if an unexpected event creates a perceived sense of urgency to act. In these situations, Burns (2005: 17) states that situation “*awareness can be characterized as the dynamic construction of mental models (via mental modules) to describe, explain, and predict an evolving situation*” [italics in original].³²⁰ In NDM, it refers to an expert’s understanding of a situation based on incomplete information, which is supplemented by expertise to predict the evolving of a situation.³²¹ Mental images are used in a problem-solving context, that is, when confronted with a problem this concept refers to the representation of that problem and the surrounding circumstances.

This type of decision-making behavior was observed in the sample in only rare cases, namely after the events of March 11, 2011. Depending on the information about the event, feelings of danger or risks to agents’ health, pressure from one’s social network, some agents did not go through a phase of situation assessment as explained in Type A decisions but reacted quickly based on a mental representation of the impact of the event on their lives, leading to quick if temporary relocation to other parts of Japan or to China.³²² Differences in perceptions of urgency, geographic and timely extent of the problem can serve to explain different outcomes in the evaluation of options; some relocated immediately and stayed in China permanently, others came back to Japan or Tokyo once they perceived the problem as contained, and again others did not perceive the threat as so strong. For the latter, the event triggered a decision-making process, yet due to the difference in perception of impact of the event and urgency to change previous behavior, there were no immediate reactions.

If the agent perceives time pressure to act, the decision-making process will look as follows (Type B decision): based on the mental image of his current state, which describes a clearly defined problem and its evolving impact on an agent’s life, he will consider a small number of potential options, choose one, plan it (a single action or a behavior consisting of many), carry it out and then enter a feedback loop. Once he has carried out the “final” action, the feedback loop will begin with situation assessment, closely observing shifting environments, and checking whether his decision was the right one to achieve his goals or whether

³²⁰ The conceptualization of mental models as the basis of decision-making is attributed to Kenneth Craik (1967), who assumed that “mental models are internal belief structures that represent an external reality” (Burns 2005: 17).

³²¹ Examples given for this process are fire fighters’ assessment before entering a burning building or ship captains seeking to avoid collisions (Burns 2005; Klein 1993).

³²² In contrast to the decision-makers Burns (2005) describes in his model, agents are not experts that supplement incomplete and even contradictory information with expertise, leading to potentially suboptimal decisions on the part of the sample participants.

he needs to act correctively (shortened Type A decision).³²³ While the differentiation between the thought processes following events that create the perception of time pressure and those that do not, this type of decision-making is the exception for participants. It is therefore not described in as much detail as regular (Type A) decision-making processes about return migration and settlement.

5.1.3 *Intention of Changing the Situation/Aborting the Decision-Making Process*

Depending on the previous phases of either problem definition and framing, definition of new goals or the creation of a mental model of the evolving situation, a migrant will either move on to the next stage of option evaluation, or abort the decision-making process. This depends on whether the agent assesses the problem as too big to solve or as too insignificant. In most cases, agents will be motivated to solve a problem that they have identified in order to improve their lives.³²⁴ How they consider alternatives to solve it is addressed in Section 5.2 on option evaluation.³²⁵ However, if the agent perceives the problem as either too insignificant or beyond his reach, he may abort the decision-making process.

One example of a problem that could either lead to the intention to change the situation or to terminating the decision-making process is discrimination at the work place. Agents frame this as a problem directly related to living in Japan, yet some may see it as a natural part of living in Japan as foreigners, while others will seek to solve it by switching jobs or countries. In the case of interviewees who have decided to stay in Japan but see the identified problem as connected to Japan, this termination of the decision-making process can be most clearly witnessed. All have experienced discrimination but have accepted it as part of their lives in

³²³ Migrants closely followed media coverage of health risks in Japan after the nuclear accident. Some acted to “correct” their decision of quickly relocating, while others then made a more informed decision that their action was the right choice. Similar processes follow the news of a suddenly ill parent: migrants may rush back without intending to stay, but evolving circumstances may induce them to decide that that is the best option. Others may only return to arrange for other care solutions or for their parents to join them in Japan. In those cases, situation assessment in the sense of checking for visa regulations, availability and cost of care in China etc. form time-consuming parts of the decision-making process, while the travel to China for emergency care was less thought-out.

³²⁴ Whether agents form the intention to further investigate solutions to a problem depends on their superficial perception of behavioral control, that is, whether they feel they possess the power to change aspects of their lives within set circumstances. The concept of behavioral control is analyzed in more detail in connection to concrete solutions and an agent’s ability to carry them out (Section 5.2.2).

³²⁵ After option evaluation, an agent may still decide that there is nothing he *can* do to improve his situation, but the end point of “intention to change the situation” following problem definition and framing means that he moves on to the stage of option evaluation because he feels the problem is important enough to be tackled and appraises it as solvable.

Japan.³²⁶ Most agree that foreigner status hinders career advancement. All of the interviewees who plan on staying in Japan agree that the Japanese economy is either bad or at least stagnating.³²⁷ Participants compare interpersonal relations in Japan to the Chinese way of communication and most prefer the Chinese style, but have gotten used to the Japanese way of social interaction. In these cases, they see the problem as too large to tackle and instead find a way to live with it, aborting the decision-making process.

5.2 Evaluation of Options

In the stage of option evaluation an agent identifies and evaluates a number of solutions to his problems or options that serve to reach the goals identified in the previous stage (Section 5.1). He does not consider every single possible option due to a lack of time, attention or information, but assesses the impact of alternative courses of action on his primary goals. Which options are considered depends on the framing of the problem, while the one chosen depends on the estimation of the agent which solution is most likely to meet his individual balance of his primary goals. Return migration is only one possible option to reach goals or solve problems, yet in the case of migrants, migration is likely to be considered³²⁸ as it has been used as a strategy to reach life goals before.³²⁹ The

³²⁶ In previous decision-making processes agents may have acted in one area of their life to decrease the level of discrimination they have experienced, for example, by switching jobs or housing. However, the experience of discrimination in their daily lives has become part of their experience, and agents intending to stay in Japan have found a way of dealing with it.

³²⁷ Although most agreed that the Chinese economy was better at the time of the interviews, this did not lead to return decisions for a number of participants. One example is a male employee from the finance industry who had spent 23 years in Japan, who explains his level of satisfaction in Japan as follows: "Basically, it is not a bad choice! [...] Probably what every Chinese in Japan thinks is that because in China the economy is rapidly developing, it looks like there are a lot of chances over there. [...] So people go back and forth in their considerations, to stay in Japan, or to return to China [...] and I think if China wasn't developing like this, but more like India, then everyone would say that it is better to stay in Japan. But I think it has no influence whether you think there are more chances in China. If you are in Japan, it only matters that if you always wonder whether you would have more chances in China, then you perceive your life in Japan as more negative, but that is not the fact. It has nothing to do with your actual life. [...] Happiness is really relative, you know. It happens in comparison. If you think it is better abroad, it is worse here. So really, whether to return or not... I think it is good here. I think staying here is good. It is a place with little pollution, lots of convenience stores, if you want to enjoy yourself, there are so many opportunities, if you have money you can do everything, there is good service, a stable society... in China, compared from that side, it is polluted, less convenient, so I think Japan is good" (interview No. 34).

³²⁸ Kley (2009: 106; Kley and Mulder 2008: 8) hypothesizes that previous migration experience should influence the decision-making process in so far as that migration is considered as an option, thereby widening the range of options.

³²⁹ One of the questions of this study is why and at which point in the migration process some migrants finally exclude or include return in their list of seriously considered options. This is because especially in the beginnings of living in a new country, problems are often linked to living in Japan and return

stage of option evaluation, to put it the language of the Rubicon Model of Action Phases (Achtziger and Gollwitzer 2009: 150) and its application to migration (Kley 2009: 42), relates to the stage of consideration. In the Rubicon model, various options may be considered and dropped again several times in the consideration stage, while after the decision is made (see Section 5.2.3 on option choice), an agent enters the planning stage (Section 5.3) in which he has committed himself to one option and dropping the option comes at a psychological cost. It is only in the planning stage that he meets the Reasoned Action Approach's (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010) criterion of having formed an *intention* to carry out a certain behavior.

This subchapter zooms in on the process and contents of option evaluation, specifically on how migrants identify, evaluate and choose solutions. Agents compromise (or satisfice) in their evaluation processes: their estimations of consequences of options may be flawed, leading to less than optimal choices; however, at the time of the decision and from the perception of the migrant, his decisions are subjectively rational. The decision-maker acts within dynamic social, political and economic environments that facilitate or constrain certain behaviors. In addition to dynamic environments, agents' individual goals also shift over time. Other agents influence the process, either directly as negotiation partners, therefore also as intervening or facilitating factors, as priorities (i.e. the agent considers the impact of his choices on them), but also more abstractly as social norms; an agent will consider how he thinks things should be, how he should fulfill his role(s) and seek to behave accordingly. Behavioral control (Section 5.2.2) sums up actual and perceived hurdles and facilitators for specific options: one solution may be considered more in depth because it will be easy to accomplish and the agent knows it is supported by his family, supportive policy or his company, while another may be excluded due to his perception of insurmountable hurdles. In the case of severe time stress (Type B decisions), the stage of option evaluation is cut short and only the impact of a reduced number of options is assessed for problem solving and goal achievement. This may happen when the trigger is an unexpected event that creates time pressure.

This subchapter is structured as follows: after Section 5.2.1 looks at the identification of potential options to solve problems or achieve goals from the spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences followed by the evaluation of said options, Section 5.2.2 zooms in on real and perceived intervening and facilitating factors, that is, behavioral control. It ends with the choice of an option.

therefore seen as a solution. However, depending on the initial goals of migrants, return may not be a feasible option as they want to gain an educational degree or working experience etc. Migrants may therefore choose not to act to solve a problem or to seek other solutions. So there is a time threshold before which return is excluded, but it becomes more difficult to predict accurately whether an agent will act according to his original intention to return the more time lies between that intention and it planned point in time for carrying it out.

5.2.1 Potential Options and Their Evaluation

After the identification of one or more problems or the definition of one or more goals, an agent makes out potential options to solve these problems or achieve those goals. The process of how he arrives at those potential options is only rarely addressed in the literature and was not one of the foci of the interviews that form the basis of this study, although some strategies can be traced from the empirical data. They are addressed in the following section, followed by the evaluation of the impact of a small number of options on primary goals.

In the stage of option evaluation participants seek to combine behaviors that will solve the identified problems and allow them to reach their life goals. This section looks at the solutions migrants consider and how they weigh the impact of them on primary life goals. A special focus lies on the option of return migration which is a potential solution to almost all of the identified problems (depending on the framing), yet which is most often excluded in the earlier phases of migration because returning too early might threaten life goal achievement.

5.2.1.1 Identification of Potential Options

Decision-making theory does not provide much information on how agents sort through information available on a problem to find a solution (Huber 1982: 116); classical approaches usually provide fixed alternatives from which to choose (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 333), while critics of rational choice such as NDM scholars focus on incomplete information and satisficing strategies. An agent does not consider every possible solution (Simon 1955: 99, 114; Zey 1992: 10–11) and assesses its impact on an unchanging hierarchy of goals, but satisfices (Simon 1972) and reduces his search to a small number of options. Strategies that have been identified in the literature for option evaluation that are, however, unspecific as to the *identification* of options, include, for example, matching or consequential choice depending on the framing, or generally analytical strategies.³³⁰ Other options could stem from social learning, from observing strategies adopted in agent's social network. In the processing of information, agents focus on only a few aspects that seem relevant, they show systemic bias.³³¹ The search for options is only subjectively rational due to its limited focus on a few spheres of his life.

³³⁰ Matching refers to the process of identifying the solution to a typical situation and consequential choice to future-oriented decisions that predict the outcome of a behavior. Analytical strategies, such as argument-driven action, mean that agents analyze situations and base their behavior on that situational analysis. See Section 5.2.1.2 on the process of evaluation of options for a more detailed account of these strategies.

³³¹ Huber (1982: 103–104) explains that in the evaluation of options, an agent goes through two phases: in the first, he reduces a large number of potential options based on little information and a few basic criteria, and in the second, he looks at each solution more closely and compares them.

NDM scholars hypothesize that agents form a mental model of reality and, in expert decision making, match a solution from their problem-solving repertoire to a typical problem (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 333). However, participants of the study would not qualify as experts, as most only chose migration as a solution once and not as a solution to a typical problem. Nevertheless, the context in which they chose migration to Japan might influence the options they consider when faced with a similar problem. As agents are easily influenced by how problems are framed (Tversky and Kahneman 1995), they will probably consider options from the sphere of the identified problem first,³³² as problems were sorted by sphere. Migrants could face a number of problems from the same or various spheres, so they needed to identify the ones most crucial to them that they wanted to solve (intention to change their situation). In the career realm, migrants face problems such as disliking Japanese working styles, lack of upward mobility, gendered career tracks and therefore fewer chances for women, or simply difficulties with finding employment. They would frame these problems as either connected to the current company at which they are employed, as a problem of Japanese employers in general, or of working in Japan. The framing is influenced by incomplete information on the structural forces shaping an agent's situation.³³³ Family problems included the acute or longer-term care needs for elderly parents, pressure from parents to return, providing good education for the child, fulfilling the spouse's locational preferences and keeping the family safe from radiation. Migrants also cited that in the sphere of lifestyle preferences, they felt lonely in Japan, discriminated, bored, or had trouble with Japanese ways of social interaction. In contrast to CDM theory, an agent considering solutions to his previously identified problems or seeking to achieve new goals is not picking from a previously defined set of alternatives, but comes up with potential solutions himself (Huber 1986: 110). Potential options to solve all of the problems mentioned above include return or onward movement, but also solutions more specific to individual problems that are addressed in the next paragraphs. Depending on an agent's character, his norms, goals and priorities, but also beliefs about himself (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 62, 79), he will consider some options in more depth than others. The following paragraphs address potential options to a few of the problems identified in Section 5.1, namely in the spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences, while briefly touching upon the process of

³³² For example, if an agent seeks a new career challenge or aims at solving his acute dissatisfaction with his employer, whether he has framed the root of the problem as being connected to his superior, his department, to his specific company, Japanese corporations in general or working in Japan, influences the options he will consider. He could answer the question of where or how to achieve his goal or solve his problem with: switching within the company, filing a complaint, applying for a different job or at a different company, moving to a different city or country, to name but a few (see the following section).

³³³ This could refer to an agent's perception of Japan's economy, immigration policy etc.

identification. They provide an overview over potential options from each sphere, while the last subsection focuses specifically on return migration.

Potential Options from the Career Sphere

Solutions specific to problems in the career realm include switching employers (to another Japanese company, international company, Chinese company), choosing another occupation, moving the focus of work to transnational business, quitting working altogether, starting one's own company, reducing working hours, filing complaints or fighting with colleagues and one's boss, getting help (from a union or a lawyer),³³⁴ to name but a few options. Not all migrants consider all options, and, depending on goals, time and information, but also their understanding of norms, they spend a different amount of energy considering each potential solution.

Participants adopted only few of these options, while some were not even considered.³³⁵ Of all participants with working experience (n=79), more than 73% had switched jobs at least once, almost 50% more than once.³³⁶ Switching jobs

³³⁴ There are some volunteering organizations that help with legal advice (*Chūnichi Borantia Kyōkai/Zhong-Ri zhiyuanzhe xiehui* [Chinese-Japanese Volunteering Organization], for example) or establish contacts with unions, if they hear of problems at work. However, they stated that it wasn't the highly skilled that came to them to get legal help with their problems, but more often lesser skilled migrants with fewer financial means and Japanese language and occupational skills (interview with Zhang Jianbo, CJVO founder, Tokyo 2011/02/10).

³³⁵ None of the workers seriously considered quitting working altogether, while other options such as filing a complaint or fighting with co-workers was considered but most often not chosen due to prevalent cultural norms of dealing with conflict in Japanese work places. However, in one case an agent (female employee of a Chinese financial institution) broke out of, as she explains, "Japanese" social conventions when reporting bullying at school, explaining it with differences in culture: "But you know I am Chinese, I don't think that keeping silent is a good way, so I just speak to my parents and my parents [spoke] to the headmaster and I think he asked my teacher something and then it stopped. So, actually, [...] I don't understand, I always see this *ijime* [bullying], in TV, I don't understand why they don't just speak out" (interview No. 87).

³³⁶ Although it was never a comprehensive phenomenon, the norm of lifetime employment and the ensuing social frowning upon job switches is prevalent in writings about the Japanese corporate system. However, as Mari Miura (2012: 105) points out, employment protection comes at the price of "functional flexibility in the internal labor market," that is, workers must accept company decisions about their employment location. Indeed, job switches among Japanese are far more common than expected, with data from 1992 showing that 72.9% of workers aged 50–54 of large companies (1000+ workers) and 61.6% of those aged 45–49 have switched jobs at least once in their careers (Kameyama 1994, cited in Miura 2012: 105). Although Oscar Johnson (n.d.) cites "social pressures not to switch firms," in the World Youth Survey of 2009 (CAO 2009), 85.4% of Japanese respondents expressed openness to job changes (however, a rising number (12.5% in 2009) also expressed that a person should not change jobs).

Foreign workers enter Japanese corporations on separate career tracks, meaning that they are often hired on a fixed term contract basis and thereby excluded from the traditional promotion system within Japanese corporations (Achenbach 2014: 231; Ono 2007: 277).

A female participant, who was doing *shūshoku katsudō* (job hunting) at the time of the interview, expressed being open about job switches when being asked where she would like to work: "Probably ...

would in most cases also be part of moving. In almost all cases it is also part of the original plan of moving to Japan, as two thirds of the sample seeks to gain working experience during their stays in Japan before finding adequate employment in China. Migrants could not only switch from one employer to another,³³⁷ but also opt for self-employment³³⁸ or could change their field of employment/occupation to escape restrictions prominent in a specific branch of the Japanese economy.³³⁹ Although almost no participants chose to reduce

a company where I feel I can be of use, where the contents of work are good, I like the environment, so I think the atmosphere is important, I don't want to work at a Japanese company, rather an international company... and in terms of money, a bit above average. [...] I think it is normal [to switch jobs], here in Japan, people relax too soon. Instead of looking for better jobs, they tend to stay on in one company. I don't want to do that. I want more competition" (interview No. 46).

³³⁷ A male participant employed in the finance industry explains his career strategy of switching employers several times was in part due to the rules of his industry but also his foreigner status:

Q: "Did you always work in the same company?"

A: "No, I changed a lot, well, maybe not a lot, but I switched jobs. First [Swiss bank], then [U.S. bank], then [U.S. bank], maybe now I am at the 5th job. Everyone has that problem, it is normal."

Q: "Normal for whom?"

A: "People in this industry, there are people who switch far more often, every 2–3 years. But usually people switch every four to five years, it's normal."

Q: "But you haven't worked for a Japanese company?"

A: "No, no Japanese company. They have that principle of working for one company for life, so no. [...] You cannot get into that kind of company, like Toyota or so. Because I was a foreigner, if I wanted to become a manager, that would've been impossible. I really would not have been able to become one. Not at a large company" (interview No. 34).

Another male employee from the same business field, who had found his first job through an introduction from his professor, explains the reasons for switching jobs as follows: "At the first Japanese company, I learned about differences in culture. When I was a student [...] there were strict and, for me, understandable hierarchies at the university in Japan], but when I started working, I thought some things were strange, but I couldn't say them, at a Japanese company some things just don't change, so in the end I thought it wasn't right for me, I need to go somewhere else to grow, I need to surpass them, but I can't in the Japanese company, so I quit" (interview No. 53).

³³⁸ As pointed out in a previous paper (Achenbach 2014), women in the sample chose self-employment as a strategy to advance their careers outside of the restrictive career paths of companies in Japan (in order to freely choose work contents, advance in their careers, and in one case, to better meet the demands of childcare, an effect of self-employment also identified by Diamond and Schaeede (2013: 9; Powell 2011: 196)). One male participant interviewed several times in 2011 and 2012 explained that after working in international companies in Japan, he switched to self-employment mainly for career reasons: "Yes, [I only worked for] big corporates, [that was a] different culture. But I mean... you learn something, and... you can learn many different things... [but] I feel, because you work for big companies, you are so busy, just... you don't really have a lot of interaction with Japanese society. Actually. So now [that I founded my own company] I really found out, the Japan I knew [before], now it is a bit different. When you work for a big company, you don't see a lot of details, don't interact with society [...], it is very busy, very much routine, just work, work, work, and time passes quickly. [...] You don't see how Japanese society functions. [I found out only] after I started my own business. Then you try to understand why, [...] you have to understand, [...] the business practice, why this, why not that, what is the reason... you can understand more" (interview No. 33).

³³⁹ A female participant from the IT industry had switched fields many times during her 24 years of working in Japan. She had started out in the IT industry, "but I didn't feel that work was necessary, so I stopped working with computers and started working in a book store, I learned a lot about Japanese

working hours or to quit working, other migrants may include it in the list of potential options.³⁴⁰ Switching jobs and moving are strategies that have been adopted before by the participants to deal with career problems/improve career chances. These options are therefore likely to be considered both as a result of matching and of framing.³⁴¹ Other options initially not considered could be included after interaction with other agents and observing their solution strategies by a way of social learning (Bandura 1977).³⁴²

Differences in the number and content of options various agents consider when faced with the same problem can be explained by the problem framing, but also with life phase, household composition, norms and preferences. Agents

culture, food, for that reason, I worked there for six years, that was really nice. In 1995, a new computer era had started and I wanted to study that, then I entered a computer company when I was already 30 years old, I worked at [large Japanese corporation], it was really complicated, it was rough, but I did that for 18 months. In 1997 there was the Asian crisis, there was insecurity, the work places were reduced, so I thought I could get into trade [...]” (interview No. 13). She founded her own company with three other agents in 2002, but stopped working there in 2005 and became a consultant for transnational businesses.

³⁴⁰ One migrant chose this option for a limited amount of time during which she returned home to care for a sick parent. In her case, it was impossible to care for her father in Japan, as he strongly disliked Japan for historical reasons (he had never visited his daughter and forbidden his wife, who had wanted to go to Japan, to visit her as well).

³⁴¹ Consider, for example, the case of one male IT employee, who explains his decision to go to Japan with career considerations, specifically, upward mobility: “My parents’ friends’ daughter went to Japan to study and got into a big Japanese company, got a good position, and the company founded a local subsidiary in China, and she became the head of that Chinese subsidiary, so [...] after graduation she said I could enter her company and rise up quickly through the ranks, [...] I needed to study Japanese. [I saw that the] Chinese boss, he had gone to Japan, and then he became the boss [in China], I can do the same, so after two years I quit and went to Japan. [...] once I graduated in 2005 [from Japanese university], the situation had changed.” So career reasons and the wish for increased upward mobility were reasons to go to Japan in the first place. For his return decision, he explains: “As I said before, the work I do now, it is a stiff system, it takes years to move up. It is about the chances. Moving up here is so much faster. [...] The Chinese local company looked for engineers from China who could speak Japanese [...] triggered by that, I went home” (interview No. 76).

³⁴² This is exemplified by the case of a male worker in the field of finance, who had spent 13 years in Japan until 2010 and had not considered returning, until: “No, I didn’t really think anything [through]. A friend of mine from the same company went back and invited me to work at his company. But I received the most influence from my brother. He went back in 2004 after graduating from Japanese university. He then founded a [...] company with two other people and went to [city in Northeast China] to lead the subsidiary, he started from zero, then in 2007 he became self-employed. Then in 2009 I met once with my brother in Japan and then we met again in 2010 in Tokyo. Within this one year there was a big change in my brother, I thought he really developed. So this pressure [*atsuryoku*] from my brother... If they really try, people can be successful, I realized, so then, all of the sudden, [...] I met with my brother in February, I went to China to check it out [*chotto mi ni itte*] in March, and then in May I went back with my family.” In his case, the positive experience of his brother met his frustration with limitations of upward mobility for foreigners on Japan’s labor market: “I suddenly decided to go. My friends around me in 2010, many wanted to go back around that time... [because] China developed rapidly, the Chinese economy grew rapidly then, there were many business chances. By comparison, in Japan, the growth has stopped, and as a foreigner, you cannot get a higher salary, you cannot get promoted, so you cannot move up” (interview No. 90).

satisfice in the number of options but also the depth in which they consider various paths of action. Which options are considered more in depth than others depends also on the agent's overall attitude towards living in Japan, working, or other specific life goals. All of the options enumerated at the beginning of this section would solve specific problems. However, some options may hinder the achievement of other life goals, for example, stopping working will solve any problems the agent has at work, but he might not have enough money to keep up or improve his lifestyle, he could miss a sense of purpose in his life as well as integration into social relationships.³⁴³ The option of return migration is included, as return is always in the back of migrants' heads, unlike for agents without migration experience, for whom international relocation is usually not among the first options that comes to mind.³⁴⁴ This study naturally focuses on the option of movement (see Section 5.2.1.1 for the option of return migration) and aims at explaining why and when migrants choose movement over other options.

Potential Options from the Family Sphere

In the family sphere, strategies to solve problems such as children's education, spouses' locational preferences, safety and health of family members in the face of radiation as well as parental care needs and wishes could include delaying/foregoing marriage, breaking off relationships, delaying/foregoing having children, entering children in strategically chosen schools³⁴⁵ (Chinese,

³⁴³ These factors relate to the various dimensions identified in the sociology of work (e.g. Mikl-Horke 2007: 11), among them the natural (providing a livelihood), social (work as seen in social reciprocity, division of labor) and personal dimensions (the importance of work for a person, skill development).

³⁴⁴ This may be different in places shaped by a culture of migration, such as Wenzhou, for example (Li 2006: 70).

³⁴⁵ In the case of one female participant working in the finance industry in China, who came to Japan at the age of middle school, she explained her parents' school choices for her as follows: "I just went directly to a public school. Yes, even though, I couldn't speak Japanese at all, but my dad said it is not good for me to join the language school first, because most of [the students there] are adults, at these language schools, so I think, like, the Japanese education is not very, very... The education level is not very good, compared to China, even [though] I cannot speak Japanese, I can still get very high scores in mathematics and English, but... so, it's ok, it was totally ok to go to the public school directly, at that time. [...] I went to a very, very good high school in Tokyo [...], which was quite famous at that time, mostly, my classmates are [...] foreigners from each country and also like kids from each country's embassy, and also the Japanese people who worked in foreign countries for a long time and bring kids with them and when they come back, the kids also join the school." In the remainder of the interview (No. 87) she mentions having been bullied in middle school for a brief period of time and her father's reasoning for sending her to an international school to make her more competitive for the international higher education market. She eventually moved to a Western country for college education. Her case exemplifies the different options but also the care participants of the study (and their parents) placed on educational decisions.

In a different interview, a male employee in the finance industry explains his worries about Japanese education as follows: "Receiving an education in Japan, we didn't want that for our child, one reason is that his parents and grandparents are Chinese, we want him to know China, another is Japanese *ijime*

international, Japanese) or sending the children to be with grandparents in China, separation of family, bringing sick parents to Japan, arranging other forms of care in China, relocating as a family.

Especially in the family sphere, decisions are made in discursive exchange with other agents. While these other agents are of particular importance in terms of their impact on the perception of behavioral control (Section 5.2.2), other agents may also influence the identification of choices; information about alternative schooling may be distributed among Chinese parents' networks and friends' experiences and solutions to similar problems lead to agents noticing other potential options. Therefore, integration into various networks and the information distributed within networks³⁴⁶ may greatly influence the identification and evaluation of choices made by highly skilled Chinese about their investment into Japan's educational system and economy.

The problem of how to deal with ageing parents is one that troubles many participants,³⁴⁷ yet the time frame or urgency of personally caring for them differs. Due to the insufficiency of the system of elderly care in China combined with the social norm of filial piety,³⁴⁸ both legal and social structures make personal care appear inevitable to the agents. If migrants cannot rely on siblings or other family networks, for most of them their choices in this realm seem to be either to "neglect their duties" (e.g. by relying on institutionalized care in China), to personally care for them by returning temporarily once the need has become urgent (temporarily separating the family or moving with spouse and children) or to return while parents are still healthy to avoid a sudden career break.³⁴⁹

Most migrants in the sample made the decision to come to Japan as a career choice willingly accepting separation from their families (Achenbach 2012: 147),³⁵⁰ but over the life course, priorities shift and family considerations gain in importance. While return migration for family (but also career) reasons is the goal

[bullying], we often heard about that, in China, if there is *ijime*, people just fight, in Japan, from what I heard, there is always *ijime*, no matter what you do, I kind of hate that" (interview No. 104).

³⁴⁶ In Bourdieu's (1980) definition of social capital as a benefit derived from a social network, information that agents receive from a network can be classified as such.

³⁴⁷ Of 104 (out of 112) participants at least one parent was still alive at the time of the interview, and 72% of those sample participants felt they were responsible for elderly care. More than half (n=53) felt they alone carried the burden of having to care for their parents in old age, while another 22 expressed that although they shared the responsibility with siblings, they still felt they had the duty to take care of parents (refer to the perception of social constraints in Section 5.2.2.2).

³⁴⁸ The norm of filial piety, which is feared to decline among younger Chinese, has recently been raised to law-status in the Law on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (*Liaonianren quanyi baozhangfa*, NPC 2012), sometimes even termed "filial law" (China Daily 2013/07/02). See, for example, Hibbins (2005: 169) for the importance of the norm of filial piety for the "gender identity of Chinese male migrants" in Australia.

³⁴⁹ Only few consider bringing their parents to Japan for a lack of care facilities that provide Chinese-language services, restrictive visa policies or parents' dislike of Japan (see Achenbach 2014: 232).

³⁵⁰ This career focus is probably a result of sampling bias and also caused by the design of Japanese visa policies favoring student migration as a means of importing labor.

of many participants, when it is included in the list of seriously considered options again will be interesting to see. However, due to the frequent geographical dispersion of family members in migrant families, return migration is almost always among the identified options to solve family issues.³⁵¹

Potential Options from the Sphere of Lifestyle Preferences

In the sphere of lifestyle preferences, other options to fight loneliness besides returning include joining clubs at university, starting a hobby or increasing the frequency of visits and phone calls home.³⁵² If Japanese ways of social interaction troubled an agent, he could join Chinese or international volunteering associations, move to areas with a high concentration of Chinese residents, or find other ways to minimize his contact with Japanese.³⁵³ Oftentimes the fact that residence in Japan is only planned for a limited amount of time induces agents to just stick it out and be patient until they return—that is, they decide to delay any action to solve their problems in this realm, such as, for example, dissatisfaction with the lifestyle in Japan, feelings of discrimination etc.³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ It is important to acknowledge that for most Chinese married to Japanese spouses in the sample, the option of return migration is never seriously considered as long as the marriage is intact.

³⁵² A female employee of an international company explains: “I feel lonely at times, but for certain things you cannot talk to Japanese friends, you cannot talk about China, about something happening there, I can only call friends in Beijing and talk to them” (interview No. 75).

³⁵³ A male participant who spent 7 years in Japan explained that he felt lonely at times in Japan, but that there were “many Chinese (among my friends) it is hard making Japanese friends. I wanted to find Japanese friends, but, really, making a heart to heart connection... it is a pity, but... [...] There were some who were really interested in China, so they were like Japanese who weren’t really Japanese. [...] I rarely met normal Japanese. [Participant reports a lack of chances of meeting Japanese due to tight work schedules and prejudice against Chinese at universities...] If you are Chinese, if your Japanese is bad, they will tell you. And even if your Japanese is at a native speaker’s level, because we have the same face... [Japanese are not interested in talking to us unlike the case of white foreigners]. There are many Chinese, it is all about survival” (interview No. 103).

³⁵⁴ A female business student, who has since moved on to various other countries after graduating with a master’s degree from Japanese university, expresses “I have been here for two years... at the beginning, I lived in Chiba. Chiba is *inaka* [rural], but the people are better than in Tokyo, once I moved to Tokyo, I thought the life in Tokyo is pretty hard, people don’t talk to you, I had thought about returning, I didn’t want to work here. I had that kind of thoughts. Now I got used to it, I think...” (interview No. 2).

This sentiment is not limited to those persons determined to stick out an unpleasant situation for only a limited amount of time. A male entrepreneur, who has settled in Japan and rules out return migration, explains the reason for his large ethnic network as follows: “Well, with Japanese... I don’t really like them. If it’s for a short time... well, with people who have grown up in the same culture, it is easier to talk to them. Japanese, I have Japanese friends, but... well [*mā mā*]. When it comes to deep talks, I cannot really to talk to them deeply. [...] Why? Because it is like that. [*shō ga nai*]. [...] No, I don’t want to do that [try having deep talks with Japanese]” (interview No. 68).

Of the 15 participants who said not only that they felt lonely, but that it affected their locational decisions, more than half explained that their networks in general as well as closest contacts in Japan were mainly Chinese.

Option of Return Migration

Return migration is included as an extra point in this section because, unlike first-time migrants, participants always consider relocation as a solution to various problems. The process of arriving at this particular potential solution differs from more analytical approaches, as most migrants view their lives in Japan as outside of their natural space, outside of where they should be, therefore return migration is matched as one of the first options when trying to solve any kind of problem. In particular, return migration may be a goal in itself, losing some of its tool-character to achieve other life goals. In other words, the solution of return migration may be in the heads of migrants before encountering the problem to which it is the solution. This is the case when migrants set a specific time frame for living in Japan to increase their human capital.³⁵⁵ If that is the case, the search for other options will be cut short.³⁵⁶ Whether return migration is seriously included for specific problems depends on the initial goal of migration and behavioral control.³⁵⁷ The closer the migrant gets to the end of his set time frame, the more likely he is to consider return migration (to reach life goals).

³⁵⁵ Return migration then takes on more than a tool character, although, of course, migrants still move in order to have better lives in several spheres (career, family and lifestyle preferences). As one self-employed male participant in his forties, who lived in Japan for 10 years starting in 1988, explained: Q: “So the most important reason you returned was work?”

A: “Yes, without work.... And also, work is one, work issues, but also... [...] the Japanese economic situation was getting worse and worse. And Chinese in Japan did many bad things [...] and that experience also has an influence; the Chinese image got worse and worse, that is another problem.”

Q: “So that also influenced your life?”

A: “It influenced the atmosphere; I didn’t do anything, but their attitude... I didn’t like that, in a word. And also my parents, they are getting old, I am old, I had no life... they told me to get married. Maybe that was the largest. And also... there were some other problems, but... work was the largest problem among the reasons. I had many good experiences in Japan but also bad ones. Japanese people sometimes aren’t nice to you. They make you silent. You always need to be silent, I don’t know why.”

³⁵⁶ Return migration will be the first (and potentially only) option considered to solve problems from any sphere, although other options might work better to solve a specific problem.

³⁵⁷ The case of a female employee of a Japanese financial institution shows how personal wishes may contrast with one’s family’s preferences and shows the limits of behavioral control (explored in detail in Section 5.2.2): “I was not planning on staying in Japan this long... spend four years in Japan, then go to America or some other country. I hadn’t even planned on working in Japan, I hadn’t done *shūshoku katsudō* [job hunting], until the time of my graduation, I had thought I would move to the U.S. afterwards. But in February, I returned to China and my parents told me it would be better to gain working experience in Japan before going off to study somewhere else again. So I came back, graduated in September, and started *shūshoku katsudō* in March after returning. [...] Yes [I will stay in Japan], because I got married, and my husband is Japanese, he doesn’t speak Chinese, so we will probably stay in Japan. If he spoke Chinese, there might be a possibility to return, but... [...] Yes, I plan on [sending my children to China]. They will get Japanese nationality, but I want them to learn Chinese, and it is difficult in Japan, so I want them to spend some years in China, for elementary school or so. I don’t know how my husband feels about it, but... [laughs] he probably wants them to stay in Japan, so we will see...” (interview No. 36).

If return migration is considered, the question to where exactly the migrants will “return” is often connected to the nature and framing of the problem. If it is connected to career considerations only, migrants will prefer larger cities such as Shanghai or Beijing, depending on their cultural preferences and job opportunities. If they are responsible for ageing parents, geographic proximity to them will be included as criteria for the choice of potential destinations (addressed in Section 5.3 on the Planning the Behavior).

5.2.1.2 Option Evaluation

After the identification of a number of options through various processes, an agent evaluates the options for their aptitude to solve one or more problems or achieve new goals. Decision theory is divided on how the process of option evaluation works, although NDM scholars agree that the impact of all potential options on an agent’s goals is not simultaneously simulated and mental simulations are not constructed for each potential action. Instead, an agent will satisfice and think about the potential impacts of a few options on the most crucial aspects of his life. In the case of return migration, this is traced in the following sections on the process and the contents of these considerations.

Process of Option Evaluation

Agents do not consider all potential options for optimal fit (Janis and Mann 1979: 27; Simon 1955: 99, 114; Zey 1992: 10–11) and not in an order best suited to solve their specific problem or reach a specific goal, but will consider more in depth those options that promise to solve their issues without too much damage to areas of life important to them (e.g. family or lifestyle preferences). They satisfice in their search for and evaluation of good solutions, that is, they look for a satisfactory solution to their problems under organizational constraints (Simon 1972). The types of constraints agents face are listed in Section 5.2.2. Agents, following the logic of SEU,³⁵⁸ look for an option that promises a satisfactory outcome for an individually defined balance of life goals. First, however, they look at the impact of the alternative on the concrete problem or the specific goal they seek to achieve, and in a next step, the impact of this option on other dimensions of their lives (Huber 1982: 97).³⁵⁹ The search, evaluation and choice of options are

³⁵⁸ SEU means that agents seek an alternative providing optimal fit; however, as has been previously pointed out, agents are not able to choose the optimal choice due to a number of constraints (as Simon (1957a: xxiv) puts it, agents lack “the wits to maximize”). The logic of agents trying to find the best solution among a number of options remains, although they only check for the impact of an option on a small number of primary goals (as argued by Simon (1972) in his satisficing approach).

³⁵⁹ See Huber (1982: 97–103) for an overview of heuristics: how agents process information for various options to reach a decision.

only subjectively rational based on the information the agent possesses and considers when contemplating various solutions and the type of impact he envisions for limited spheres of his life.³⁶⁰ Agents are influenced by the type of trigger starting the decision-making process, perceptions of time pressure and clarity of goals as well as framing of problems (Lipshitz 1993a: 129; Tversky and Kahneman 1995), as has been pointed out in previous sections. This should influence the content but also process of option evaluation, in that the number, but also the depth in which potential solutions are assessed for their impact on primary goals, vary. If the agent has set clear goals and aims at solving a precisely defined problem, the evaluation of potential options should be a rather straight-forward process. The patterns of searching and evaluating options in the absence of severe time pressure are similar to processes described in “consequential choice” (Lipshitz 1993a: 129): comparing alternatives for their utility and visualizing the effect of alternative behaviors on primary goals.³⁶¹ The less flexible an agent is in various areas of life (and trying to combine goals from all three spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences), the more complicated option evaluation becomes.³⁶² As the focus of this study is on return migration, special emphasis is placed on this option in the following description of the evaluation process.

The time frame for option evaluation differs by the time available (there might be real or perceived time pressure to act), as well as the novelty of the situation and impact of a decision. International (return) migration has a strong impact on all aspects of life, unlike a move within the same neighborhood, for example. It is therefore likely that decisions about international relocation are rather lengthy and thorough compared to routine decisions that are made based on previous experiences and established beliefs of the agent (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 24). In this thorough process, there is a lot of going back and forth between

³⁶⁰ March (1994: 10) has identified the following four limits that inhibit option evaluation: limited attention, memory, comprehension and communication.

³⁶¹ Consequential choice refers to “forward-looking choices,” in that agents analyze an option for the outcome it will bring about and base their choice on how likely and attractive they perceive that outcome (Lipshitz 1993a: 129). Lipshitz (1993b: 180) argues for the conceptualization of decision making as argument-driven action, that is, an agent behaves in a certain way because he has identified reasons for the implementation of such a behavior. In this way, he includes processes of consequential choice, matching and reassessment strategies.

³⁶² One example could be an agent’s preference of living environments in the sphere of lifestyle preferences: if the problem can be framed as connected to living in Japan, and an agent is generally dissatisfied, he is more likely to cut his search for information to correctly assess his options short, while if he enjoys living in Japan, he will look deeply into solutions for his problems in Japan (the impact of locational preferences on return decisions is further explored in Chapter 6).

different considerations.³⁶³ If an agent believes that return migration will lead to a positive outcome (positive behavioral belief), he is more likely to consider it.³⁶⁴

As pointed out above, depending on time, attention span, information, but also his perception of behavioral control, an agent will compare different numbers of options in various depths for their impact on his primary life goals. In cases of perceived time pressure, the choice is made more quickly. This becomes clear in the example of 3/11, briefly examined in the following: moving away was the first choice for many, but the way in which they decided where and when to move, as well as how long to stay there, differs. The decision to move if only for a limited time after 3/11 is a good example for agents matching a small number of options to their mental simulation of the situation, among them staying in Tokyo and potentially changing one's lifestyle for a limited amount of time, going outside of Japan without specification of the time frame, returning to China for good or spending some time away from Tokyo in Japan (a few agents went to Osaka). The first choice is between staying and leaving; that choice was quickly made for most of them, but the decision of where to go depended on the availability of transportation, money, networks etc. According to sequential choice models, an agent under time pressure will tend to pick the first that fits satisfactorily and not think of other solutions after that (March 1994: 18–19). Under time pressure, the strategy of matching, that is, adopting the solution that is deemed the appropriate solution to a “typical” problem without a lengthy comparison to alternative behavior fits the process observed in the sample.³⁶⁵ In conclusion, depending on the time available, the gravity of the situation and the influence of other agents,

³⁶³ Kley (2009: 42) also points out that in the pre-decisional stage, many aspects are considered and dropped. In the case of a male entrepreneur, who had switched jobs several times in his career both in Japan and in China before deciding on self-employment, explains his decision not to follow his usual career problem-solving strategy as follows: “Yes, [I worked for a Japanese company in Beijing for] two years, and then I thought that was enough. In the company, the work I wanted to do, what I do now, I couldn't do that, and so I thought it would be better if I became self-employed. I had also thought about entering another company, but a Japanese company, in Beijing, it would be difficult, so becoming self-employed would be best. The work now is located between Japan and China [...], I focus on that, I didn't want to work on Japanese finance for many reasons, [...]so I thought I should found my own company. [...] of course, I like [my work], I am no salaryman anymore, I have done this job for three years now, I have not yet gotten good results, but I will keep pushing [*gambaru*]. It is frontier work; it is not really on Chinese finance, either, so I founded the company in a good situation in a much needed niche, so I will keep pushing” (interview No. 112). In his case, his usual strategies (matching previous solutions to similar situations) seemed unfitting to solve his main goals in the career sphere and he therefore analytically sorted through other potential options, choosing the one that promises the achievement of a number of career goals.

³⁶⁴ Despite many agents' belief that returning will positively affect their lives, normative or control beliefs (see Section 5.2.2) may get in the way, inhibiting the forming of an intention to return, which, according to the Reasoned Action Approach (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010), predicts behavior.

³⁶⁵ Matching seems adequate even though, of course, the events of 3/11 are not a “typical” situation during which an agent can rely on experience to act appropriately. However, a threat to his health in an agent's place of residence, therefore the endangering of the basic need for safety, makes movement (or fleeing) one of the first options considered.

the number, sequence, depth and strategy of option evaluation³⁶⁶ will differ in each case. The following zooms in on the content of these evaluations.

Assessment of Options' Impact on Primary Goals

After the identification of potential options to solve (a number of) problems or to reach goals, agents assess the impact of these options on their primary goals. Scholars have both hypothesized about how the process of evaluation works and which goals agents look at specifically. Primary goals shift during the life course (certain basic needs stay the same) as some goals take precedence over others in certain life phases. This section first looks at migrants' primary goals and then presents assessment strategies.

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have conceptualized human needs and goals (see Ormel *et al.* 1999), among them Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs,³⁶⁷ Lindenberg's Social Production Function theory (Lindenberg and Frey 1993) that includes universal and instrumental goals,³⁶⁸ while migration scholars such as De Jong and Fawcett (1981: 50) have focused on the more specific goals of migration.³⁶⁹ In the sample, agents enumerated goals from three spheres relevant for choosing a place of residence: career, family and lifestyle preferences (see Section 2.3.3).³⁷⁰ Career goals included high wages, challenging work contents, working styles/prestige, human capital expansion, upward mobility or, as in the case of entrepreneurs, business expansion. Family goals were three-fold: being a good spouse, child or parent, while each of these larger goals can be subdivided into more concrete measures to fulfill these goals.³⁷¹ Lifestyle preferences included autonomy (freedom, self-actualization), living according to political, ideological or religious convictions and a rewarding social life. Some goals

³⁶⁶ According to Janis and Mann (1979: 30), there is a *minimal cutoff point* for the testing of the impact of each alternative on a small number of goals.

³⁶⁷ Maslow's (1943) hierarchy, which is often presented as a pyramid with the more basic needs at the bottom, consists of physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization needs, with physiological needs as the most basic needs.

³⁶⁸ At the center of Social Production Function theory stand the conceptualization that agents seek well-being by trying to achieve the best-possible outcome in universal goals, while facing constraints. Universal goals include physical and social well-being. Agents can reach both by achieving instrumental goals: stimulation and comfort for physical well-being, status, behavioral confirmation and affection for social well-being (Ormel *et al.* 1999: 66–68). These goals can be substituted to a degree, which distinguishes this conceptualization from Maslow's (Lindenberg 1996: 172).

³⁶⁹ They list seven larger goals: wealth, status (career), affiliation (social and family life) comfort, stimulation, autonomy and morality (lifestyle preferences) (De Jong and Fawcett 1981: 50).

³⁷⁰ In only very few cases basic needs were specifically cited; however, 3/11 and the threat it presented to agents' health, or (prolonged) unemployment that might threaten an agent's livelihood, are examples of basic needs that agents seek to meet by moving.

³⁷¹ Measures include fulfilling parents' wishes, sending remittances, taking care of elderly parents, supporting one's spouse, providing good education and a safe environment for the child, helping with identity formation and spending time with the child (see also Table 2.3).

spanned several of these spheres, such as work–life or work–family balance, or were more abstract, such as leading a “satisfied” or “happy” life.³⁷²

Agents set new goals once they have reached one of the goals, or goals may shift over the life course, especially during life course transitions (e.g. childbirth).³⁷³ Lindenberg and Steg (2013: 40) point out that behavior can always only improve parts of life, “depending on the overarching goal that is focal at a given moment.” Agents focus usually on one area when looking at how to solve that one problem or reach that one goal, but neglect or compromise in other areas. This is a pattern for lesser decisions such as job switches that agents expect to only affect their working lives. However, with advanced life phase (the presence of a spouse, children or ageing parents), agents need to assess the impact of taking a risk in their careers or of increasing working hours on their family. Big decisions, such as relocation, are most often analyzed for their impact on various life spheres.³⁷⁴ Agents simulate the impact of a small number of potential solutions on a few primary goals, or, if they add a new goal, test its compatibility with other primary goals (Lipshitz 1993a: 116). In the process, they do not only look at specific goals but also at norms, at how things ought to be (Beach 1993); this is especially relevant in social relations, in norms of filial piety or what constitutes a good spouse or parent, potentially even a good citizen.³⁷⁵ This notion of norms and expectations about an agent’s behavior by his social network is also reflected in the Reasoned Action Approach; intentions (to act in a certain way) are formed out of behavioral, normative and control beliefs (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 179).³⁷⁶ Even if an agent feels positively about returning, normative or control beliefs (addressed in the next two sections) may prevent him from acting upon his positive evaluation.

Migration is usually a tool to reach goals, whether these are intermediate goals that form steps towards larger life goals or primary goals such as being a good spouse. Initial migration to Japan is such a tool to reach specific life goals; whether that is a successful career, experiencing life abroad or any other personally defined life goal. Over the life course, goals shift; once the goal is reached (or the migrant drops it), agents will set new goals. Goals may be ill-defined, or they may

³⁷² Ambiguous goals that agents enumerated included being acknowledged (both in their working lives and as valuable members of society), free, independent, but also giving back to society, evolving personally and in their careers, facing new challenges and achieving self-actualization.

³⁷³ How goals shift for which groups of migrants is explored in detail in Chapter 6.

³⁷⁴ Yet an agent may still make a decision that compromises his satisfaction with one life sphere for an improvement in another (e.g., moving for career reasons and accepting his family’s dissatisfaction).

³⁷⁵ A male participant employed at a state-owned telecommunications company in China expresses: “My friends are all in here. I love China. I love my country. I think [...] there are a lot of chances in developing countries, especially China, China’s development is very fast, so I thought maybe I can do something” (interview No. 115).

³⁷⁶ The Reasoned Action Approach as well as its applicability to decision-making processes of sample participants is presented in more detail in the next section (5.2.2 on behavioral control).

compete with each other. Contrary to rational choice conceptualizations, an agent most probably does not have a set hierarchy of goals, but primary goals of which some take precedence in specific life phases. In the logic of subjective expected utility, an agent will therefore consider the impact of an action on his primary goals and seek a solution that allows him to fulfill his most important responsibilities and goals. Agents may cope with conflicting goals or insufficient information about how various actions may affect their goals by comparing pros and cons or simulating the intended actions and making assumptions about the consequences (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 338, Lipshitz and Strauss 1997; March 1994: 38).

In the case of migrants, if return migration is in the mix of potential options,³⁷⁷ they consider the effects of several potential solutions on: upward mobility, overall chances, state of the economy, income, applicability of skills, working styles, atmosphere, economic policy in the career sphere, children's age and education, environment, spouse's opinion and occupation as well as the responsibility to and opinion of parents in family sphere, as well as politics, freedom, lifestyle, character, identity, ideological goals, feeling well integrated and feeling at home in the realm of lifestyle preferences.³⁷⁸ International relocation is an option that affects all spheres of life: working environments, potentially also work contents, family life and lifestyle. Therefore, relocation may also be a way to achieve various goals, but also one that affects one prominent life sphere positively and others negatively.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ For the large majority of participants, due to the aims of the study and methodology, return migration is included in the mix of potential options for the problems addressed in this study.

³⁷⁸ Luo's (2003: 296) study produced similar results, as he identified the following patterns: "Their [students considering emigration] decision is made after weighing up the costs, the disparities between the educational levels at home and abroad in science, technology, culture, education and economy and the benefits of having a foreign degree. Family and social factors, as well as desires about lifestyle and place of residence, are also important. Those returning consider the contribution that they can make to the neighbourhood, workplace and relatives." Massey and Espinosa (1997) also explain that in migration decisions, agents weigh the influence of "many factors which themselves vary over time" (Iredale, Guo and Rozario 2003: 6), specifically looking at networks, human capital and market consolidation.

³⁷⁹ A male participant employed in a Japanese financial company in Shanghai explains his choice to return as follows:

Q: "So you say you weren't actually really dissatisfied (*fuman*) with life in Japan?"

A: "Well... the most important reason [that I returned] is that I wanted to become a valuable member of society. And then, I thought, if I tried, if I tried, if only I tried hard for my company [I would achieve that], but in Japan that was not really acknowledged."

Q: "You did not consider switching companies?"

A: "Even if I switched, I think the result still would have been the same."

Q: "So you really went back to advance your career?"

A: "Not so much for my career, but for my skills, I wanted to revive them. It all started out with computers and accounting, right? Then I went into finance... I studied finance, I expressed my own thoughts, [I connected people through computers], I want to create a program [...] making the Japanese market, making Asian markets strong. What would happen if we did this in China, that is what I thought, that is why I came back" (interview No. 90).

5.2.2 Behavioral Control

This section zooms in on the various constraints agents face in the decision-making process. These constraints are both actual constraints beyond the control of the agent, and perceived constraints, resulting from insufficient information or an agent's bias. An agent takes his perception of external opportunity structures and other constraints and facilitators into consideration in the evaluation of various options. Based on his perception of constraining but also facilitating factors, he will discard some options and consider others more in depth. This concept of behavioral control was developed by Ajzen (1988: 132) and later included in Fishbein and Ajzen's (2010) Reasoned Action Approach. In that approach, beliefs shape intentions, which, in turn, predict behavior unless intervening factors prevent carrying out the behavior. More specifically, the beliefs shaping intentions consist of behavioral, normative and control beliefs. Behavioral beliefs refer to the subjective evaluation of the outcome of a behavior and if that is overall positive, the individual possesses a positive attitude towards performing a behavior. Normative beliefs refer to normative pressures such as what one's social network thinks about a behavior, and control beliefs are the perception of facilitators and constraints for behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 20–21). In this section on behavioral control, that is, how an agent perceives his ability to perform a behavior, normative and control beliefs play a role. These beliefs are formed on the basis of incomplete (or even false) information. In order to explain behavior, Fishbein and Ajzen (2010: 24–25) argue, behavioral, control and normative beliefs need to be examined, and the beliefs may differ by factors such as “age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, [...] personality, mood, emotion, general attitudes and values, intelligence, group membership, past experiences, exposure to information, social support and coping skills.” While there are real hurdles and facilitators that make carrying out a certain behavior harder or easier, an agent's perception of these constraining or facilitating factors in the field of politics, culture or economics influence his beliefs, his evaluation of options and thereby his motivation (Ajzen 1988: 134, 143, Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 21–22).

A female academic explains her choice to return as follows: “Before I graduated, I had thought about working in Japan. For example, at that time, at university, [...] there was a [...] *shūshoku katsudō* support center, there... I got a lot of information, like about NHK journalists [...] And also, I had read a lot of things about it. But... In the end... When I thought about it, [...] the one thing I liked was studying, doing research [...] and I am Chinese, there is a wall. [...] As a Chinese, the topic of study is a problem. [...] while I was in Japan, I wasn't satisfied there. [...] I would always be a customer. Not a natural member of society. I could try, but it wasn't my place. [...] I was unsatisfied with my life, so I thought about where I should be, where I should do my research. I could only do it in China [...] I wanted not only to work, but to do basic research. [...] So I returned for my own... how to put it, my own work, my own passion, doing that is the most rational. So in the end, I decided. [...] My [*ikigai*] reason for living is... well, doing research on China's problems. [...] Personally, it is hard, but... [I did] for research. I don't feel the hardness, it is no problem, because of research. Living here, I don't feel it, but others do. That is a problem here” (interview No. 81).

Fishbein and Ajzen (2010: 64) “define behavioral control as people’s perceptions of the degree to which they are capable of, or have control over, performing a given behavior.” It is closely related to self-efficacy but also other widely used academic concepts such as agency or autonomy (Bandura 1997; Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 153; Rodin 1990: 1). Fishbein and Ajzen (2010: 21) propose the use of the perception of behavioral control as a proxy for actual constraints, which are harder to measure. Actual constraints, in their model, come in as intervening factors after an agent has already formed an intention; in that case, the intervening factor is the reason to abandon the intention. However, the following sections seek to differentiate between the actual and perceived constraints and facilitators, because both already impact option evaluation. Some agents, although aware of real constraints, work around them by compromising in some life areas to realize more important goals. Agents may also over- or underestimate support structures (both from policy or economic frameworks and social networks); perceptions of facilitating factors make a closer inspection of some solutions that appear easier to put into action likely. Yet, despite the differentiation between external opportunity structures and agents’ psychological disposition in this section for reasons of clarity, in agents’ decision-making processes only their *perception* of any type of hurdle or facilitator matters.

Behavioral control is closely connected to problem definition, as too little thoroughness in the phase of problem definition in addition to limited or wrong information (or communication, March 1994: 10) lead to misconceptions about suitable solutions and the power and aptitude of the individual in solving it. This section is divided into actual constraints and facilitators hindering or easing the specific behavior of return migration or settlement as the primary focus of this study. Dynamic environments, in which both migration and decisions happen, often lead to a gap in the image of a migrant about circumstances in his home country at the time he left and its current situation; an agent’s perception of his aptitude to perform a given behavior in the context of return migration is therefore likely to be flawed. What matters in the decision-making process of agents is the perception of behavioral control: this includes both the (potentially flawed) perception of “real” constraints and facilitators but also their preferences. This section differentiates between the two to inform the reader of external opportunity structures that shape the context of migration on the one hand, and psychological dispositions of the decision makers on the other. The decision that results from this process is based on the agent’s perception of his ability to work around the constraints he perceives both in terms of external opportunity structure and his individual goals and norms.

5.2.2.1 External Opportunity Structure

Factors that fall into the realm of actual constraints or facilitators come from the field of political regulations (visa, industrial, labor market policy etc.), economics (company regulations, economic structures etc.), and network contacts (if other agents affected by the potential option support or oppose it and through this negatively/positively influence the decision maker). This section is structured by these three spheres. Constraints and facilitators are mainly systemic macro- and meso-level factors, although micro-level factors directly influence the real and perceived factors an agent needs to consider in his weighing of different options; for example, migrants with children are likely to consider other factors than childless singles, IT workers others than academics.³⁸⁰ As this study adopts the perspective of the individual decision maker, this section will disregard the individual characteristics to provide a model of the process of decision-making, while Section 6 focuses on differences of different agents (by life phase, for example). Table 5.8 depicts actual constraints or facilitators enumerated by participants as influential in their locational decisions.

Table 5.8: Problems Caused by External Factors Influential in Migration Decisions, MRQ

scholarship/contract requires return	6
stay until permanent residency visa	3
pensions in Japan	3
economic crisis/Japanese recession	7
attractive Chinese policies	1
3/11	5

compiled by the author.

In Fishbein and Ajzen's (2010: 22) conceptualization, perceived behavioral control impacts intentions to carry out a certain behavior, while actual control in the form of environmental factors as well as skills or abilities interfere (again) when an agent seeks to realize his behavior. This study differentiates between external opportunity structures and psychological dispositions already at the stage of option evaluation, because real-life constraints or facilitators impact the evaluation of several behavioral options, a factor not explicitly accounted for in the Reasoned Action Approach. Intervening factors may come in again, though, in the stage of planning action.

³⁸⁰ For example, if an agent wishes to return home for reasons of filial piety, but perceives his chances on the Chinese labor market as too low due to his limited human capital, this will be treated as a constraint of the labor market in China. Options for him then include delaying the return or to settle for a less satisfying job than he imagined when leaving China to increase his human capital abroad.

In an effort to explain talent mobility, Andrés Solimano (2008: 5) includes “policy regimes and immigration policies” as one of seven elements influencing the mobility of the highly skilled. This applies to migration policy, but also to policy shaping the occupational and family lives of migrants. In the policy field of migration, national government policy has largely focused on controlling international immigration (Cornelius *et al.* 2004), while in the Japanese case issues of integration are dealt with on a local level by local governments and civil society (Vogt 2013; 2011).³⁸¹ For highly skilled, various governments have tried attracting skilled labor from abroad, but also inviting their citizens back to their home labor markets with various policies.³⁸² In the Chinese case, there has been a rise in returnees especially since the 2000s to up to 36.5% in 2011, tendency rising (Luo 2013/02/28; Wang 2013; Wang, Tang and Li 2014). In their study conducted in 1999, Luo, Guo and Huang (2003: 97–98) show that government programs played a crucial role in attracting back talent in 29.5% of the cases they examined, while better opportunities in the specific location of Shanghai (a result of policies to make the city more attractive to returnees) were the most important factors for 32.4% of them. However, their study also showed that half of the returnees included in their study did not have detailed knowledge of assistance programs for returnees; they conclude that these agents “had an impression that the overall social and political environment had changed in favour of those who had obtained overseas qualifications and who were willing to come back” (Luo, Guo and Huang 2003: 101). In local policy initiatives, favorable tax policy and other benefits are offered to returnees as incentives to build their businesses there. Other economic and public policies that affect mobility (Solimano 2008: 9) are those that shape a country’s labor market, business opportunities, economic growth, salaries (e.g. in public institutions), taxation systems, but also the abilities of professionals to carry out their work depending on national regulations (see Achenbach 2012: 139).

Policies shaping an agent’s occupational environment (regulations regarding content and employment etc.) therefore can serve as factual constraints or facilitating factors when an agent considers switching jobs or relocating. On the

³⁸¹ Local governments only have limited if any say in policy formation, but are responsible for policy implementation (Vogt and Achenbach 2012: 20). One exception may be the *Gaikokujin Shuyū Toshi Kaigi*, an initiative by mayors of municipalities with a large(r than national average) population of non-Japanese nationals, that shaped the national discourse on integration and call for a more comprehensive approach towards integration on a national level (Vogt 2013; 2011).

³⁸² One female academic explicitly mentions the impact of government policies on her decision: “Yes, I will definitely return, go back to China [after my post-doc contract runs out...]. I want to work as a researcher and gain more experience, so if I stay another year, that will be ok. I want to learn about Japanese engineering, increase my knowledge, and then return. In China, there are many good policies at the moment, they are looking for Chinese talent from abroad, so because there is that policy, I am applying for different projects. If I get in, I will start packing up and go back” (interview No. 21).

other hand, migration policy aiming at controlling immigration and settlement can serve as a constraining or facilitating factor: visa regulations about allowed length of stay not only have a psychological effect on migrants,³⁸³ but if visas are not renewed, a migrant faces the choice of becoming undocumented or leaving the country (if only for potentially a limited amount of time). If the expiration date of a visa is drawing near, a migrant might opt to stay at a job he dislikes until visa renewal before going through with active job search; thereby visa policy can have an effect on the timing of career decisions. On the other hand, visa policy may affect the timing of settlement and return migration in the way that some agents expressed the plan to stay in Japan until they can apply for permanent residency. Thereby, the government-set time threshold becomes a goal to meet before the migrants feel free in their choice of location, as through permanent residency they have the right to freely return to Japan.³⁸⁴ One might expect the same or stronger effect for foreign citizens who have taken on the nationality of their country of residence.³⁸⁵ However, in the sample, the reasons for changing nationality were business-related³⁸⁶ and did not lead to permanent settlement in Japan. Regulations

³⁸³ This effect refers to the time frames that migrants intend to stay (if visas are given out for a three-year period, migrants are likely to make plans initially for these three and not more years). Having to renew visas reinforces migrants' feeling that they are "guests" in Japan and not natural members of society, therefore each renewal may lead to a reconsideration of satisfaction with life in Japan.

³⁸⁴ This ability to freely return applies to the designated time period of the re-entry permit when leaving the country. Staying abroad for a specific amount of time without a re-entry permit makes the status void (Tokyo Immigration Service 2008). Dumont and Spielvogel (2007: 163) also found that host country policies may affect the time migrants intend to stay abroad.

³⁸⁵ Constant and Massey (2002a: 32) found that political attachment in the form of citizenship influences mobility behavior of guest workers in Germany.

³⁸⁶ Four of the five participants that changed their nationality from Chinese to Japanese did so for business reasons (one changed it with her parents who reside in Japan); one owns her own business in Japan, while the other three did it to escape travel restrictions (especially to Taiwan) they faced due to their Chinese nationality. However, that decision did not have an impact on their self-identification as Chinese. This echoes Le Bail's (2005) findings who points out: "Nationality and identity are increasingly becoming separate things," culminating in a quote of one of her Japanese informants: "while for [Chinese] oldcomers nationality was 'a question of skin', for newcomers 'it was just a matter of what shirt you wear'."

A male employee of a Japanese technological company in Shanghai who had spent 15 years in Japan explains his change of nationality as follows: "The reason is that, at that time, I was in the field, outside, doing work, and with the Chinese nationality it was hard to do that, because of the work, that is one reason, and the other is... I had been in Japan for a long time, and at that time, I was close to 10 years, and I really liked Japan, I also like Tokyo, it is easy to live there, and I have always worked in Japan, and I had graduated in Japan, worked in Japan, always worked in Japan, from Japan I was sent to the U.S. to work, but it was always from Japan. I have many Japanese friends, friends in Japan, I like it, and because of the work, at that time, my wife as well, we were thinking, about the future, about education, I hadn't really thought about it so deeply. I had been going back and forth, because of that, timing, I changed my nationality, my friends also suggested I do this" (interview No. 77).

Another female employee (of a Japanese company at the time of her nationality change) explains her decision in the following way: "First, it is for the job, because it is always troublesome to, you know, go abroad, when I was working for [large Japanese corporation], everyone went to Taiwan, when there was something urgent, but I always had to wait for my visa, it was so troublesome, so I wanted to

about visas and economic laws about entrepreneurship may also affect the way in which migrants pursue career goals.³⁸⁷ A few agents also mentioned pensions as one reason to refrain from moving back to China.³⁸⁸

Other policies that present hurdles or facilitators are regulations about personnel exchange, for example, academic exchange on MEXT scholarships. The scholarship holder agrees to return after a certain time spent in Japan, while not being able to apply for a different visa status to stay in Japan longer or with a different occupation.

Economic Constraints/Facilitators

Economic constraining or facilitating factors include macro factors such as economic crises or growth, levels of development and the demand on various labor markets (size of economic sector), but also meso-level connections between companies (intra-company transfer or corporate labor markets), in addition to salary levels and purchasing power.

An agent, when contemplating whether to return or to switch jobs in his current location, will compare his chances for finding a job suitable for his skills, salary levels or opportunity structures for building a new business (size of potential consumer/customer group) in both countries.³⁸⁹ These points are closely connected to agents' perceptions; however, it is possible to underscore these vague perceptions with facts, if agents strategically test various markets for their ideas, research salary levels etc. When thinking about starting a new business, local regulations (such as taxation) can serve as incentives to build businesses in a specific place. Economic crises and booms influence decision makers in such a way that for some products, the market will be slim to non-existent while creditors' and investors' money might be easier available in boom times. Some places are more attractive for specific types of businesses; there is a geographic division of industries both nationally and internationally.³⁹⁰ Also, companies themselves (in

change it. And my daughter is a key factor, because I thought she would like to go to Japanese university, so we changed it" (interview No. 75).

³⁸⁷ Four out of nine of the self-employed participants (who (had) owned a business in Japan) founded their first companies with the help and knowledge of Japanese partners (or settled migrants) to receive help with and navigate Japanese company law.

³⁸⁸ These worries were formulated rather vaguely, as in the following quote by a female participant, who had spent 22 years in Japan at the time of the interview: "What I think now [about how long I want to stay in Japan], [...] my rights to a pension, since I only worked in Japan, if I stop now, what will happen to those benefits, I don't know" (interview No. 13). Dumont and Spielvogel (2007: 153) also found that the "portability of social entitlements" affect return migration or settlement.

³⁸⁹ Iredale, Guo and Rozario (2003: 24) find that Chinese return "to benefit from the rapid growth [of the Chinese economy] and opportunities."

³⁹⁰ Yet, participants disagreed to some extent showing different perceptions: while one male entrepreneur explains that "the content of work is finance, so Beijing would be the most convenient, I also could have gone to Shanghai but Shanghai is more a center for makers and other companies, but not really for finance. Most financial institutions are in Beijing" (interview No. 112), a male employee

addition to well-developed industries) may have the reputation, technology and job openings to attract the best brains.³⁹¹ The same applies for universities: a number of students entered specific Japanese universities for the reputation of that university but also because Japan has a reputation in China to be at the top of certain technological fields.³⁹² Connected to this is the transferability of human capital—skills acquired in Japan might be specific to that market and not transferable to China, for example, because the industry is not as developed. However, this might also be an issue of perception and of career preferences, because migrants could bring in skills into other branches of the economy. The need for specific skills in an economy fluctuates with development but also trading levels (as the transnational economy is an important source of employment for returnees). A number of migrants explained that they needed to gain working experience to be able to market themselves well to Chinese employers, while their predecessors could rely on a Japanese degree to be a desirable employee.³⁹³ In fact, to what degree human capital transfer is possible differs by industry (and its technological advancement) as a real constraint. It is important to differentiate between the structures that actually hinder or facilitate the transfer, such as intracompany transfers or university cooperation, and the perception of migrants of where they prefer to and are able best to bring in their skills (described in the subsection on career preferences in Section 5.2.2.2).³⁹⁴

from a Japanese financial institution expresses that “Shanghai is the big financial center of China, and I was in Tokyo, another financial center. [...] Shanghai is not a political center. Beijing is, of course. [...] Shanghai is in the middle, if you go south, it is the economic center of China, but Shanghai combines politics with economics” (interview No. 88).

³⁹¹ In IT, it is more important at which company one has worked than one’s formal educational level (Iredale 2001: 10).

³⁹² Waseda University, more than others, was chosen for its reputation in China in addition to the quality of several departments. In contrast, the following male language school student, who already holds a bachelor’s degree from a Chinese university, explains his ideal choice of university as follows: “What I like best is Tsukuba Daigaku, the multimedia lab [...]. I thought about going to Kansai, to Nagoya or Osaka University, but what I like best, because of the major is Tsukuba Daigaku, they have the best department” (interview No. 63)

³⁹³ This is in line with Liu-Farrer’s (2011: 89–90) explanation of *haigui* of the 1990s and *haidai* (highly sought after returning students (sea turtles) and unemployed returnees (sea weeds), respectively, see Chapter 4). Luo, Guo and Huang’s (2003: 95) sample included returnees from various countries (most returned from the U.S., Japan, UK, France, Canada, Germany, Australia and Russia). Returnees from Japan tended to have working experience (80%); the only other country with working experience levels that high was the U.S. (81%) compared to the average 72%.

A male employee working in IT, who returned to China after seven years in Japan in 2007, explains: “What I had thought when going to Japan, I had thought I would become the boss, but in reality, from graduation, the other Chinese *Ryūgakusei* were still too many, it is not comparable with the situation 10 years ago, back then, if you only knew Japanese you could become the boss, that was a different situation. If I had gotten to that level at that time, I would have gotten a good position, but I graduated in 2005, there was a good economic situation in 2005, but all the good positions were already taken” (interview No. 76).

³⁹⁴ Facilitators of mobility are intracompany exchanges, for example, between Japanese headquarters and their Chinese subsidiaries. Employees have limited say in where they work, as there is no right to

Participation of Other Agents in Decision Making

While other agents, especially family members, play a role in migration decision making, because a migrant ponders the effect of potential options on their lives and his responsibilities toward them (see Social and Family Constraints/Facilitators in Section 5.2.2.2), they may actually also serve as participants in the decision-making process demanding actions or facilitating processes. In the literature, the influence of other agents in migration in general is understood in various ways: while some scholars explain migration with household decisions, others look only to the effects of decisions that affect families, especially when it leads to a (temporary) separation of the family.³⁹⁵ To explain mobility behavior, it is necessary to look at family composition, gender and the position of the agent in the household (de Haas and Fokkema 2010: 543; Harbison 1981: 231–233; Willis and Yeoh 2000: 254).

Family and friendship network structures serve as facilitating factors,³⁹⁶ if, for example, social network contacts offer benefits (social capital) such as access to jobs or child care.³⁹⁷ In many cases parents offer to help with child rearing and thereby form direct negotiation partners when considering different options for child care. Another example for the influence of social networks contacts is the aftermath of the 3/11 triple disaster. Although some agents did not consider moving from Tokyo in response to the nuclear crisis, parents, friends but also employers pushed them to relocate.³⁹⁸

refute relocation (Miura 2012: 105). In that case, human capital transfer as seen by the company is facilitated, although migrants may not use the skills they themselves would like to emphasize in their working lives.

³⁹⁵ Patterns include “reverse parachute-kid families” (Yang 2013: 132), which refers to sending the children to live with grandparents in China, or sending the child abroad for education while staying home, one parent moving with the child, or in the case of childless couples, “the man returns to China while the wife remains overseas [and only few] singles seem to be returning” (Iredale, Guo and Rozario 2003: 20). In Luo, Guo and Huang’s (2003: 101) sample (80% male), 58.6% of the returnees were supported by their partners, 10.8% were opposed and 30.6% neutral.

³⁹⁶ Networks have been found to encourage or discourage movement: either through an agent’s integration into a community he could be discouraged from movement (affinity hypothesis, Uhlenberg 1973), while conflicts within the network or support from network contacts of movement may increase the likelihood of migration (Haug 2008: 589).

³⁹⁷ This is in line with the information and facilitating hypotheses (Haug 2008: 589), stating that contacts living in potential destinations increase the likelihood of migration by providing information and facilitating adjustment through introduction to jobs and networks (Hugo 1981). One male employee whose case has been presented earlier in this chapter (interview No. 90), formed the idea of going back to China due to a job offer from a friend, even if he did not take him up on it. He used his family’s (brother) connections to enter a bank in the city where his brother had opened his business.

³⁹⁸ This pressure from an agent’s social network can change agents’ perceptions of the impact of that particular event, but also shape their perception of behavioral control, if they do not want to risk a falling-out with employers, parents and friends. The triple disaster had an impact on various branches of the economy (tourism, for example), thereby facilitating it for the agents to go somewhere else if only for a limited amount of time or inhibiting them from finding a job in a crippled economy. A female employee in the tourism industry explains how after working non-stop for a few days after the

By negotiating directly with the involved parties, an agent becomes acutely aware of the extent of his leverage and, thereby, his control to achieve his preferred outcome.

5.2.2.2 Perceived Constraints

In the agent's evaluation of potential options, it is not the factual feasibility but the *perception* of control against external factors and internal beliefs that matters. As Fishbein and Ajzen (2010: 169) put it:

“When people believe that they have the required resources and opportunities (e.g., skills, time, money, cooperation by others) and that the obstacles they are likely to encounter are few and manageable, they should have confidence in their ability to perform the behavior and thus exhibit a high degree of perceived behavioral control (or self-efficacy).”

The perception of potential obstacles to carrying out a behavior is likely to rely on incomplete or even false information, and an agent's perception of facilitating factors may be also be falsely estimated.³⁹⁹ This section looks at agents' perceived behavioral control in the subfields of career, family and lifestyle preferences.

earthquake, because customers required special assistance during that time (to book accommodation and return flights, etc.), her employer shut down the Tokyo branch for “one month. In Japan, wherever you were, things closed down. So for the company, people in charge, they were all in [international location of the headquarters], and because they value their staff, the owner said that [...] he will go get the staff. We are a top hotel, we always provide good safety, if there is only the smallest thing, the elevator will stop, so we couldn't make sure we had the best service, we couldn't fulfill the company's philosophy, so for a month, we closed. The staff would try to come to work, because the trains stopped and people couldn't come to work, people came late, because no one lives directly in Tokyo and their families are scared, so they closed down, they gave us money and then... well, we got our normal salary, but also [a bonus. ...] The hotel closed on the 19th, and I got a message from the [division head] and was told I could go home” (interview No. 43). The participant continued to work at the hotel chain's headquarters in Shanghai to gain working experience on the Chinese market and returned to Tokyo a month later.

A female graduate student explains why she was separated from her child at the time of the interview as follows: “He was in Japan most of the time, but after the earthquake... I thought I would be ok, everyone is living like normal, but my parents, my husband's parents, they were scared and they all live closely together, so they were really scared, because everything here is so close to the problem, so this year in October my husband's parents came to pick him up. [...] I will finish up the thesis, so next year I think I will be able to graduate and then immediately return, because my child cannot come to Japan, so I want to go home” (interview No. 64).

³⁹⁹ Examples of incomplete or false information influencing option evaluation include awareness of (return) migration policy, current state of the Japanese/Chinese economy or demand in one's field of employment, one's employer's need to cut staff or expand, hiring systems, or even the opinion and flexibility of one's spouse, availability of Chinese-language schooling in Japan, child care facilities provided by Chinese or women's networks etc.

Career Preferences

When contemplating goals in the career realm, such as high salaries,⁴⁰⁰ challenging work contents, social status connected to the occupation, specific working styles, raising one's human capital, upward career mobility or business expansion, agents contemplate how, and in the case of migrants, where (both in terms of location, company and type of employment) best to achieve this. Depending on how agents framed the problem (as connected to the employer or working in Japan in general), they will evaluate various options, but their perception of career facilitators and constraints when comparing Japan and China remain the same. Influential in the career sphere are control beliefs (normative beliefs are addressed in the next section on social facilitators/constraints). Oftentimes, the characterization of job chances for Chinese highly skilled migrants in Japan remained on a superficial level based on stereotypes of the Japanese economy and hearsay; however, as these stereotypes have the power to affect migrants' behavior, they should not be simply discarded. This is particularly the case for younger students making decisions about where to apply for entry-level jobs.⁴⁰¹ Chinese who have gained working experience in Japan have more insight, however, the perception of constraints in Japan and facilitators in China often rely not on in-depth market analyses but hearsay and mental images and stereotypes formed over the years. When considering return migration as an option to solve problems or reach goals in the career sphere, agents compare the following factors in Japan and China: facilitating and constraining factors for upward mobility (levels of discrimination in Japan vs. *guanxi* in China), being able to use all skills (human capital transfer), opportunities for business expansion and salary levels (spending power).

⁴⁰⁰ Zeithammer and Kellogg (2013: 645) found that Chinese STEM PhDs are mainly driven by high salaries in their return migration more than by "any inherent preference for staying in the United States"

⁴⁰¹ In one case, a male engineering student explains his worries and plans about his future career:

Q: "Can you imagine staying in Japan forever?"

A: "No! Definitely no."

Q: "Why is that?"

A: "This is [because I am a] foreigner, I read a lot of book[s], I talked to a lot of sempai, if you work in a Japanese company, I think as a foreigner you cannot move up to a high level. [...] I studied [this] in class, just a culture or Japanese companies class, [companies] are [structured] like this: [...] This is the top level in [a] European or American Company, European people can go to the top level, but in a Japanese company it is like this, Japanese can go to the top, but other country people just cannot... it is very interesting."

Q: "Could you imagine entering an international company in Japan, is that an option for you?"

A: "Yes, it is an option, an international company, yes, I could, my sempai works at IBM, yes, it is an option, it is a choice, but it is difficult to enter a big company like this, apple, or IBM, when I go back to China, a big company like Sony, a Japanese company, then it is an option."

Q: "So I understand correctly that you don't want to enter a Japanese company at this point?"

A: "Not for now [laughs], maybe in my second or third job, if I cannot find anything at an international company" (interview No. 42).

Many participants explained that their foreigner status⁴⁰² hindered their career advancement in Japan.⁴⁰³ In particular, participants explained that Chinese are passed over for promotions. Almost 60% of returnees explained that they had better chances of being promoted in China, and 31% of those considering migration felt that way.⁴⁰⁴ Some of the interviewees mentioned *guanxi*,⁴⁰⁵ the necessity of human connections in the Chinese economy, as a problem in the career sphere they anticipated when returning to China. 36 mentioned this: 14 expressed concern about this issue,⁴⁰⁶ either because they simply had no beneficial connections (especially if they originated from remote provinces and sought to work in Shanghai or Beijing),⁴⁰⁷ or because the concept of *guanxi* presented a problem for the Chinese economy in general (12).⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰² When saying that their “foreigner” status impacted their career negatively, that need not refer to issues of nationality; participants that had taken on Japanese nationality reported incidents of discrimination, as they were not, in the language of Apichai Shipper (2002: 44), sociologically Japanese.

⁴⁰³ Of the 57 participants that commented on the impact of their foreigner status on their career in Japan, 8 felt it did not pose a hindrance, while 4 even saw it as an advantage. The remaining 45 explained that their foreigner status impacted their careers negatively, and 10 even saw the lack of openness of managerial positions to foreigners as one of the big problems of the Japanese economy. One example is the case of a female business student: “Because of [negative media representations of China in Japan], I don’t want to stay in Japan. For foreigners, [...] Japan [is] not open to new things from abroad, things that are different from its people, it is the same at work, it depends on the company, but overall, foreigners cannot proceed as fast as Japanese. Becoming the boss, having a career, it is easier for Japanese, it is different for foreigners” (interview No. 56)

The lack of upward mobility is not only an issue for Chinese in Japan, as other studies have found that Chinese failed, for example, to see prospects for a managerial career in the U.S. (Iredale, Guo and Rozario 2003; Zeithammer and Kellogg 2013: 646).

⁴⁰⁴ However, 60% of those contemplating migration felt chances were equally distributed in Japan and China for upward mobility, especially when considering working in the transnational economy.

⁴⁰⁵ *Guanxi* (关系) refers to personal connections that enable a person to ask another for a favor; “it lies in the skillful mobilization of moral imperatives in pursuit of diffuse and calculated instrumental needs” (Langenberg 2007: 1). See Langenberg (2007) for an analysis of the connection between *guanxi* and business practices in China.

⁴⁰⁶ 12 were not worried about *guanxi* because they failed to see its importance in modern Chinese business life (2) or because they were well integrated in China (10).

⁴⁰⁷ A male IT master student, who returned to China after the interview late in 2011 after having spent six years in Japan, answers the question about whether he wants to return to China after his upcoming graduation as follows: “Returning, probably... probably after having worked here for 3 to 4 years. Going back directly is a bit... for Chinese society, it is a stricter society. Yes. If you don’t have connections, the Chinese society... relationships are important. *Guanxi*. Yes. If your family, if in your family, there is an official, or... you can do all sorts of things. For work, for example. But for normal people, they can’t get in” (interview No. 7).

⁴⁰⁸ A female scholar, says: “In Chinese society today, of course, skills are important, but that is not enough. You need skills plus alpha. Alpha is networks, human relationships. Of course at this university and at companies, skills are important. The concept of skills is also different” (interview No. 82). Or, as a male employee of a Japanese financial company explains: “It is less about the human relationships in Japan. You graduate, you do job hunting, you go to the interview, and then you start working. If your friends or family called the company, it would not really have an influence, right? In Japan. But in China, it is different. Your friends’ kids, your friends, you call the company for them or

Work contents, raising an agent's human capital or working within his skill set and appreciation of the employee (as well as prestige) are in some cases closely connected, yet only few of the interviewees felt they could use all of their skills only in China (11) or Japan (9).⁴⁰⁹ Another issue that may serve as a constraining factor is the perception of the possibility of human capital transfer from Japan to China. This is particularly the case if agents were trained in Japan-specific fields, or if they specialize in a field in which technology is not as developed in China as in Japan or, in academia, in a field of research that is politically restricted.⁴¹⁰ However, these perceived hurdles in human capital transfer are connected to agents' career preferences and the contents and skills they would like to emphasize in their working lives (in contrast to factual constraints hindering movement), as some participants have decided to move even though they could not put their preferred skills to use in China or Japan.⁴¹¹

the other way around. Really. I hear stories like that a lot, that is how people find employment in China. I find that odd. [...] so the human relationships... you always work under supervision, as someone's protégé, you always owe [...]" (interview No. 90).

⁴⁰⁹ One male participant went back to work in China, but left his Chinese wife and child behind in Japan as they preferred life there. He had worked in Japan for 20 years until 2008, and switched within his company to the Chinese branch of the Japanese company. He answered the question about whether he had wanted to return or was asked to switch locations as follows:

Q: "Did you also want to return?"

A: "Yes, of course, of course, because here I am the first, I have old knowledge. When I am in Tokyo, I know the things about Chinese, I know the things about Japan, but in a Japanese company, 'you are a foreigner, so you are in charge of the foreign countries, your knowledge on Japan is not important,' that kind of thing, of course, happens. [Now] my knowledge, I can use it. What I know about China, its society, the Chinese government, Chinese production, the patterns, what Chinese think about it, how they live, communicate, I understand all of that, how to explain it to the Japanese customer, that is my job, it is what I can do" (interview No. 88).

⁴¹⁰ A female social science student, whose preferred job is in arts or academia, explains that if she had to choose between conducting her research in Japan or China: "It is hard... hard to choose. It depends on the topic. But because there are political problems, maybe doing research abroad will be better."

Q: "What kind of problems?"

A: "Political problems. Especially because of communism, the change. You can do research on that, but not publish on that. [...] you need to be patient. Probably now, China... I heard from a professor [from a Japanese university], China is changing, it will be a while, but it will get better, the situation now. Now it is bad. If it takes 20 years, before I can do good research... [...] I want to return to China, [but because of the social problems] I am here. I don't want to [live in Japan forever], the atmosphere is dark. If I lived here forever, I would go crazy" (interview No. 71)

The participant mirrors a factor that Luo (2003: 302) identified, namely that an improvement of academic freedom would induce return considerations for a number of Chinese, even if they are aware of potential problems upon return.

⁴¹¹ One female entrepreneur had lived in Tokyo for another four years after her husband had returned with their two children to Beijing, because "I like working. At that time in Japan I had worked here for 10+ years, so all of my clients, experiences and contacts were in Japan. If I returned, I wouldn't have anything in Beijing. [...] In the beginning I didn't understand anything" (interview No. 120). However, together with her husband's and her family contacts, she formed another company two years after her return and is now able to use her skills after all.

Although expecting high salaries has been identified as one of the driving forces of international labor migration (cf. Massey *et al.* 1993: 432–434; Zeithammer and Kellogg 2013: 645), the Japanese wage system that rewards company loyalty is too slow in providing raises for good performance, so that Chinese look to go somewhere else to increase their salaries.⁴¹² Although companies have reacted by offering career-track jobs in specific niches of the economy (Liu-Farrer 2011: 99) as well as limited-term contracts for foreigners, the wish for higher salaries, or, to be more precise, spending power,⁴¹³ acknowledgement of one's skills and efforts, giving back to society as well as social prestige are some of the reasons participants consider return migration. For entrepreneurs, the career goal is business expansion. In order to achieve that, they need to find investors, bigger consumer markets, find qualified personnel and generate sufficient revenue.

A factor that might span several spheres is an agent's assessment that he has not yet achieved enough to successfully return to China. In the career sphere, this could relate to not having built up sufficient human capital to find a satisfactory job in China. This is a belief about a mismatch between the agent and the labor market that need not be true, but that influences the perception of control over the agent's fate and may lead to a delay of his preferred solution of return migration.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹² Miura (2012: 105) points out that employers have been trying to increase the weight of merit-based wages in contrast to seniority-based wages since the 1960s and that the "presence and importance of personnel assessment runs counter to explanations based solely on seniority-based wages." Yet, change to the wage system is slow and foreign workers face difficulties both in advancing internally (Liu-Farrer 2007: 187) and, often through separate career tracks, are excluded from seniority-based promotions (Achenbach 2014: 230–231; Ono 2007: 277).

⁴¹³ Salaries and purchasing power of executives (target group of this study) in China is rising, making China an attractive destination and making it difficult for companies in industrialized nations to pay comparable wages (Rapoza 2013/03/14).

⁴¹⁴ For example, 11 of 36 participants who had intended to stay in Japan only to study extend their stays in order to gain working experience. Once the end of their intended time frame drew near, they checked whether they had achieved their goals and increased their human capital enough to be able to compete on the Chinese job market or whether their locational preferences had changed. This change in plans echoes Liu-Farrer's (2011: 89–90) findings that Chinese students in Japan without working experience have trouble finding employment when returning. China's labor market has become increasingly competitive: returning students compete with locally trained students and without international working experience or knowledge of local business culture, students perceive their chances as slim. This is especially true if Chinese students earned degrees from low-tier universities in Japan (Liu-Farrer 2011: 90). Returnees from Japan, if they haven't earned a degree from the top universities, have a rather weak image, because going to Japan may be a way to escape China's tough university entrance examination system (*gaokao*).

The following statement of a female business (master) student exemplifies another point, namely that, in addition to a degree, working experience is also necessary for a successful return:

Q: "Do you think your experience in Japan will help your chances on the job market?"

A: "Well, when I first thought about coming, I only thought about studying. But then, after being here for a while, after studying for two years, chances in China were really slim, but... yeah, why did I decide to work here? I think I will learn a lot from working at a Japanese company, about how to do

The same feeling of not yet having achieved enough may be connected to other spheres, such as not having achieved enough to make parents proud, boast to one's Chinese network or having had enough of an adventure before settling down in China.

Social and Family Constraints/Facilitators

A variety of beliefs influence the perception of behavioral control in the social sphere (of family and social contacts). Fishbein and Ajzen (2010: 20–21) differentiate between normative and control beliefs. Normative beliefs concern an agent's assumption about the positive or negative evaluation of a behavior by "important individuals or groups in their lives" (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 20). Control beliefs refer to the positive or negative impact of "personal or environmental factors" that enable or hinder the agent to carry out a certain behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 21). In this section, the two are combined: an agent's perception of the opinions of his next of kin about behavioral options and whether he will be able to carry out a behavior should they disapprove of it are included. In the sample, family support or disapproval was the most important factor migrants considered in the social sphere, but as group membership influences beliefs (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010: 24), the evaluation of a behavior by one's social network can also serve as a constraint or facilitator. The impact of various people on relocation decisions changes with life phase, as does the importance of or the adherence to specific social norms. This section will deal with the impact of parents, spouse, children and network contacts on the perception of behavioral control of agents in that order.

The biggest concern for most participants connected to their parents is how to take care of them in old age or providing for them materially at any age. Many younger agents (the generation affected by the one-child policy)⁴¹⁵ explained that "making my parents happy" was a priority for them, while the older generations saw their responsibility largely in material support. What matters at this point in the decision process is the importance agents assign to filial piety and how they think "things ought to be" (Beach 1993). This is not static but changes with life phases and also during the migration process when agents are confronted with other cultural norms. How norms relating to any field of life are honored differs over the course of time in an agent's life with changing priorities. In order to fulfill the norm of filial piety, migrants can get in touch with their parents regularly,⁴¹⁶

things, so when I get back to China I will have competitive strength [*kyōsōryōku*] and knowledge" (interview No. 12).

⁴¹⁵ See White (2006) and Greenhalgh (2008) on the one-child policy, its context and implementation since 1979.

⁴¹⁶ Of 58 that answered the question, 31% were in touch with their parents daily (37% of women, 25% of men), almost 20% several times a week, 31% weekly (44% of men), 8% every other week and 10% monthly. Most (42) used online services or phone calls to talk to their parents, while a smaller group

send remittances, study hard to make them proud, but eventually, some may feel the need to return physically,⁴¹⁷ especially in order to care for them in old age.⁴¹⁸ Parents' support or pressure for return migration or favorable opinion of permanent settlement in Japan can serve as a facilitating or constraining factor to the migrant pondering relocation.⁴¹⁹ In terms of "control," that is, whether the migrant can choose his preferred option in spite of parents' disapproval, most migrants only felt a strong impact if they were financially dependent on their parents or they had to fulfill the role of caregivers. Yet, even in those situations, returning permanently is not the only option, as migrants can fulfill their duties until their parents' death, and return to Japan afterwards. There were differences in the importance men and women attributed to filial piety and the role it played in their locational decisions (see also Achenbach 2014: 233).⁴²⁰

(16) kept in touch (texting/emailing) through other media (n=69). This is markedly different from older generations of migrants in Japan who had to rely on costly pay phone calls or letters.

⁴¹⁷ One participant who has started working for an international organization in Japan after graduating with a double degree (PhD) from Japanese and Chinese university explains: "Chinese have a very strong concept of family, this is also another reason [why I am planning to go back in the future], my parents still want me to go back, they opposed my decision to stay in Japan, so for the time being they allowed me to stay here, but I have to *oyakōko* [filial piety]. Particularly [because] I see my parents getting older and older, of course, at this moment, my younger brother is taking care of them, but I have the responsibility, so in China, actually it is the same as Japan, the oldest son has the responsibility to take care of the family, so that is also part of the reason. [...] I am from the most *inaka* [rural area] [...] in my hometown I might be the only one who can go to a high ranking university, my parents, they even... [borrowed] a lot of money, so when I graduate [from the] undergraduate [program], my family is in heavy debt, because really it is not easy for a family like mine in China to afford two children to continue their education. My family, my parents, [...] they always think that the future of the children is the most important, so they save[d] a lot of money just for our education, and it proves to be true. [...] really, my primary school classmates, they are still in the *inaka*, the rural area, so you see my parents changed my life, really, in that sense they really gave me a second life, that's why I want to go back to Shanghai and be a proper... they changed my life, I should to some extent, I should change their life in the future [...] Our debt is already paid off, of course, I contribute[d] most of it [through my] scholarship [...] I got 150,000 Yen, so in one month I can save money from the scholarship and I can give that money to my parents" (interview No. 55). The participant also did part-time work in order to send more money to pay off the debt.

⁴¹⁸ Of all participants whose parents were alive at the time of the interviews, 53 held the sole responsibility to take care of ageing parents, 22 shared it with siblings, while 29 relied on siblings to take care of their parents (28) or refused to do so because of a strained relationship (1). In some cases, counting on siblings in China to take care of ageing parents does not mean that agents are actually relieved of the burden. This is the case of a female employee in Beijing, who had both a brother and a sister, but whose mother asked her to return to take care of her, to which the participant reluctantly agreed, despite having to leave a life in Tokyo she enjoyed (interview No. 108).

⁴¹⁹ Of those considering returning to China, parents supported any locational decision for 27 of them and expected return in 26 cases. For those who did return, parents of eight participants would have supported their stay abroad, but in 17 cases they insisted on participants' return.

⁴²⁰ One female language-school student, who had gained working experience in Shenzhen after graduating with a bachelor's degree in business English, explains:

Q: "When your parents get old and need care, how will you deal with that?"

A: "That is what I am most scared of. They are still young, not sick, but they will get older and my brother as well, he doesn't live close to my parents, and because I am a girl, the daughter, it is my duty,

Marital status also influences perceptions of behavioral control, and specifically the impact of the perception of whether the spouse supports or disagrees with a behavior differs by gender:⁴²¹ women married to Japanese husbands ruled out return migration as options,⁴²² while men married to Japanese women considered the option of return migration in far greater depth.⁴²³ The impact of family and how it changes locational preferences becomes clear not only through Rossi's (1955) pioneer study on changing housing needs of families,⁴²⁴ but Zeithammer and Kellogg (2013: 645) also conclude that in STEM PhDs in the U.S., "single men are more likely (than women and married men) to prefer returning to China." Zweig and Chen Changgui (1995) find that "women express much greater intent to remain in the United States" (cited in Zeithammer and Kellogg 2013: 647).⁴²⁵ Among the returnees, 15 out of 17 female spouses liked living in Japan, while four out of six male spouses disliked it.⁴²⁶ It could be

my responsibility. I am scared of that. That is why now I need to do what I want to do, I need to be independent, work, make money [...]. If my parents get sick, then I am already independent, even if they get sick, I can easily go home. I can take care of them" (interview No. 61, already introduced in Section 5.1.2.2 on the Setting of New Goals).

As becomes clear in another interview with a male employee, who has a brother, the responsibility among brothers (or siblings) in general should be divided as follows: "At this moment, my younger brother is taking care of them, but I have the responsibility... So in China, actually it is the same in Japan, the oldest son has the responsibility to take care of the family [...]" (interview No. 55). However, in cases in which there were sisters in the family, those were seen as carrying the main burden of caring for their ageing parents (in the future). Hibbins (2005: 174) explains that it is usually the oldest son who is responsible for elderly care, but that there "were exceptions in those cases where the wealthiest child, irrespective of gender, was considered responsible for the well being of parents" in his study on male Chinese migrants to Australia.

⁴²¹ Both strategies to achieve goals and options to solve problems differed for married and unmarried women, for those with children and those without (Achenbach 2014: 237–238).

⁴²² This echoes Kalter's (1997: 216) finding that the opposition of one member of the household to movement is one of the most important factors from the family sphere to discourage mobility.

⁴²³ Three male participants were married to Japanese women, who disliked the idea of moving to China with their partners. Of the three men, one continues to live with his wife in Japan (2 children) and rules out moving back. One spent an about equal amount of time in Japan and in China while his wife continued to reside in Japan (one child), while another one returned to China with his wife (childless). However, the latter describes his wife's feelings as follows: "She is still suffering in China. She doesn't like China. The environment. I understand that, I really do... I appreciate her suffering, because as a Japanese they have... you know in Japan everything is clean, in good order, in China you really cannot expect that, that is the main reason she is suffering, she cannot really enjoy her life here, everything jumped into her eyes, [...] many things are really unacceptable, so she is kind of suffering, I don't know how things will end." Although his wife is pushing for moving back to Japan, he is unwilling to comply, citing mainly his career preferences: "Honestly, I don't like to work in Japan. It is too stressful. There are just too many rules."

Willis and Yeoh's (2000: 261) find that "for men, marriage and children do not appear to be major obstacles to postings abroad (although individual circumstances may lead to non-migration)."

⁴²⁴ Rossi (1955) focused on changes in household size that create the need for different housing or change household income (marriage, divorce, childbirth).

⁴²⁵ Marital status is not mentioned.

⁴²⁶ As one female employee of a Japanese manufacturing corporation puts it: "We met in Japan, but my husband went back to China before me [...] Men, in Japan, it seems to be difficult. They often have

observed in the sample that when agents considered various options to solve problems or achieve goals, married participants are likely to include their spouse's wishes even before talking to them about a short-list of options. Married women explained their return considerations (or lack thereof) with their husband's strong opinions about living and working in Japan.⁴²⁷ The anticipation of difficulties that members of the family may face when an agent chooses a specific behavior form part of his evaluation of options, specifically his perception of behavioral control.⁴²⁸ The perception of behavioral control and its impact on the evaluation of specific options differs strongly by household size, life phase and gender. Decisions about relocation, changes in employer or occupation affect a partnership (economically or in terms of lifestyle), therefore a partner's support can facilitate or his disapproval can complicate the process (but need not hinder it, depending on agents' priorities and strength of primary goals).⁴²⁹

With the birth of children, priorities generally change and new factors have to be included when considering career options and family locations. Education is one of the major concerns of parents. While opinions about the quality of the Japanese and Chinese school systems differ, decisions about where to enroll the child are made between the parents based on the "best interests" of the child, which may be defined by identity, educational achievement or proximity to family.⁴³⁰ Depending on these priorities, parents may consider sending the child to China for a limited amount of time, enrolling him in Chinese school in Japan,⁴³¹ sending him

more difficulty at work, with the human relationships, so he thought China would be better. [...] It is not that different for women, but, maybe, the Japanese, the women are easy to approach, they accept you, I think, the men are stricter" (interview No. 119).

⁴²⁷ Reflecting "Chinese patriarchal cultural value and gender discrimination at workplaces," it is the norm that the man's career (husband or brother) takes precedence over the woman's career (Cooke 2011: 270; see also Achenbach 2014: 232–233). However, in terms of outcome women were able to negotiate their preference of location until the birth of children when the distribution of power within the household as well as priorities shifted (Achenbach 2014).

⁴²⁸ See Kley (2009: 142–143) for examples of anticipated problems such as a partner's difficulty to find employment in the new location.

⁴²⁹ In some cases, partners decided to focus on career first, and to this end stay in Japan longer, although that meant a sacrifice for one of them in terms of career, or both of them in terms of family life. This is the case for a female doctoral student (interview No. 8), and her husband employed in IT (interview No. 15). They spent time apart when the wife went to Japan and the husband finished his degree in China, yet after graduation, he joined her in Japan, although that meant difficult job search, low spending power, and unenjoyable working environments for him. They are also delaying starting a family until she is awarded her degree.

⁴³⁰ See Adams (2004: 475), Chiang and Hsu (2005), Michielin, Mulder and Zorlu (2008) and Tabor (2014: 130) for the impact of parents' concerns about a child's well-being in locational decisions.

⁴³¹ Parental concerns include the competitive nature of the Chinese educational system, which may hinder the return of the entire family after children have reached school age. This may lead to only one parent returning to China for career reasons (Luo, Guo and Huang 2003: 109). This is echoed in one participant's case, who returned to China because he wanted to be acknowledged and use all of his skills in the Chinese branch of a Japanese company. His wife stayed behind with their child in Japan, because "she really likes Japan now, because it is stable, right? There are rules, manners, she has gotten used to it" and because the Japanese educational system is thought to be a better place to build "a good

to regular Japanese schools, one spouse returning with the child or the entire family going together. In only one case did parents opt to separate from the child who stayed in China with his grandparents due to the child's dislike of Japan,⁴³² usually it is a partner's (or parents') strong opinion about education and identity,⁴³³ or, after the 3/11 triple disaster,⁴³⁴ the safety of the child in Japan that influences the perception of behavioral control of agents.

The impact of contacts from one's social networks on behavioral control (and normative beliefs) is comparatively small, yet the behavior of, for example, one's Chinese friends in Japan or their career experiences in China influence the evaluation process about potential options in so far as it gives impulses to reflect about what constitutes smart behavior in terms of career and family. Strong suggestions about returning to China as the "right" strategy⁴³⁵ or gaining more human capital in Japan before applying for jobs in China may influence an agent's evaluation process of specific options.⁴³⁶ Yet, the impact of network contacts is usually limited to normative beliefs, as no one doubted he would be able to carry out a specific behavior against the disapproval of his social network contacts.⁴³⁷

character," because "in Japan, schools there, they also learn about society, about how you should live, the knowledge you need to live, public things, you learn all sorts of things. So what you learn in China is not enough." The participant only returns a few times a year, but does not see it negatively impacting the child: "Well, he is a boy, while he is small, he needs to become independent" (interview No. 88).

⁴³² A male engineering student came to Japan for half a year in elementary school but fought with his classmates so much that he asked his parents to let him return. He only came to Japan again after finishing high school in China but still dislikes living in Japan (interview No. 70).

⁴³³ A female Chinese entrepreneur who had a six-months-old child at the time of the interview explained: "My husband has returned for a bit, he wants to speak Chinese all the time also for your child. He doesn't want our child to become Japanese. Being in Japan as a newcomer, it is the second society, I think that is very interesting. But he doesn't want our child to feel Japanese, he wants Chinese education for the child. That really is a difficult issue for me. I will return in the future, I have to, I think. We have the Beijing office right now, and I think I might just go back and forth between the two. I don't know where I will be more, but I will have to go back and forth a lot. It will be rough. I don't want to start from zero again, but... [...] I am happy I chose a life here. I can see my parents on the weekends and work somewhere else" (interview No. 74).

⁴³⁴ Especially in the case of 3/11, agents base their perception of the situation on limited and often contradictory information, particularly if migrants relied on multi-national news sources. Mental models of migrants differed with regard to the need for and urgency of action on their part and on the prediction on the development of the situation of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant. Sources of information were Japanese and international media, but also one's social network in Japan and China (information from employers or universities, friends and family).

⁴³⁵ A male employee from a Japanese media corporation followed the advice of his network: "When China entered the WTO, my friends advised me, from now on, you should work with China. If there is a chance, please return to China. Work with China. When I was told that, the number rose, and since 2003 the economic situation in China got better and better, being in finance, and knowing Japanese companies, they wanted to improve their situation in China, and I became responsible for that [...] I went back and forth, and then in 2006 I really went back" (interview No. 77).

⁴³⁶ One function of social networks besides the distribution of information is provision of emotional comfort, thereby impacting migration experiences (Achenbach 2015).

⁴³⁷ Faist (1997: 188) claims that social ties between movers and stayers that are upheld even after migration explain "why many movers return to the countries of origin."

Lifestyle Preferences

In the realm of lifestyle preferences, perceptions about what could hinder or facilitate living freely or according to one's political or religious convictions⁴³⁸ influence the evaluation of options. A number of participants referred to their duty to contribute to their country or their wish to be part of China's development.⁴³⁹ In Zeithammer and Kellogg's (2013: 645) study on STEM PhDs in the U.S., they go as far as to say that in "terms of attitudes, we also find that students with a higher degree of general national pride are more willing to sacrifice income to return home." Others in the sample, although they believe they could earn higher salaries if they returned to China, are dissatisfied with the low degree of freedom with which they would have to live. Freedom was defined very differently and criticized as lacking in both societies: in China it referred to media censorship and

⁴³⁸ One active Buddhist, an entrepreneur, expresses that he prefers life in Japan over living in China due to the lack of religious freedom there. However, he returned to take care of his ageing mother. He explains: "I want to go to Japan. I hate Beijing, really [...] I returned in 2007, but really, when I was in Japan, I thought it was rough. But once I returned to China [...] I thought Japan was a really good country, living, the body gets tired, but the soul, the heart has no problem. In China the heart gets tired. [...] I don't like it [living in China] at all. [...] It sucks [*yabai desu yo*]. Everyone is all about money. [...] I don't need money, only to live, but I am a Buddhist [...] if you don't have Buddhism or beliefs in a society, there is chaos, it is like this now. [...] Me and other Buddhist friends, we study Buddhism together, that is forbidden. [In China] there is no freedom, no law [...] it is not a civilized society. [...] But, my mother is here, it is unsafe, after I came back, but there is nothing to be done about it [*shō ga nai*], that is life, the life is not only made up of good parts, there are many hard parts in life, it is ok, I think today. Buddha is in my heart, so it is ok" (interview No. 113).

⁴³⁹ Most participants of the study express a strong "Chinese identity," which also comes across in the wish to contribute to "their" country. Aihwa Ong (2005: 5) refers to identity in the sense of "imagining yourself as part of a community," drawing from Benedict Anderson's (1983) concept of imagined communities. China is a multi-ethnic state, yet the concept of "being Chinese" when spending time abroad, "common feelings of a shared life" (Ma 2003: 11) lead to self- and outside identification of the participants as Chinese, despite a fragmentation of the Chinese "community" in Japan (see Achenbach 2015: 40; Skeldon 2003: 61–62). The factor of "giving back to the homeland" has been cited in other studies on return migration of Chinese students (for example, Hazen and Alberts (2006), cited in Zeithammer and Kellogg 2013: 647).

This sentiment is also echoed in the following quote by a male academic, who expressed when inquired whether he considered returning to China in the future: "Of course, of course, I mean, it is true, really, in China now there are a lot of opportunities, and... for me, I still have a dream to... realize, I want to contribute to my country, because when this country is rising, you will be excited to keep [up] with it, to be part of it, to work with it, you don't need to worship it, but... you are thinking that [...] I should be part of this story, you can't be outside of the story, in the long run I am still willing to and I want to go back to China to work. But [...] it is not practical yet" (interview No. 55).

freedom of speech,⁴⁴⁰ while in Japan it referred to strict rules of social conduct.⁴⁴¹ Of 52 interviewees that mentioned freedom in Japan, 34 felt free in Japan,⁴⁴² while 16 mentioned social constraints to their freedom (one political constraints). For China, of 37 interviewees, 7 explained that they felt free in China, while 30 felt unfree (22 for political reasons, one for social and six for general reasons).⁴⁴³

5.2.3 Choice of Option

After the evaluation of several potential courses of action for their impact on primary goals and whether these courses of action are realizable, an agent will decide on a course of (in)action. How exactly the process of *making a decision* works or how the choice of one alternative over another is made remain

⁴⁴⁰ Some participants directly criticized the strict control of China's population through various political organs, as alluded to by the following quote of a male entrepreneur: "What I liked [best about Japan is that] there is freedom. [...] In China, all my life, the whole time, there is always control, by the government, for example, [...] I could really relax in Japan" (interview No. 93).

Almost all participants viewed their home country critically, mirroring findings of Luo's (2003: 302) study: "All Chinese are well aware of the potential problems they face if they return to China. Most people don't complain about the lower living standards as they are able to have a relatively comfortable life in China if they can earn enough income. However, almost all people express deep concern about the social infrastructure. While they appreciate what the government has been doing in trying to attract returnees, many think that the government should improve the social infrastructure. Less tangible factors, such as improvements in grant application procedures, promotion and personnel systems and academic freedom, would provide even greater incentive."

⁴⁴¹ A male employee working in IT explains his preference for life in China as follows: "I like Shanghai better, [...] in Shanghai you are freer, Japan is a little stiff. It is convenient. I like Shanghai. Life is not inconvenient [in Japan], but life is stiff. You can't speak loudly, you cannot laugh, at the company, there is nothing outside of work. But once I returned, I have many interests outside of work, I can talk to people, we travel together, you can't do that in Japan" (interview No. 76).

⁴⁴² A female entrepreneur states that she appreciates the opportunity given to her in Japan to express herself: "Am I happy in Japan? Yes, I think so. Because I found myself. I told you, my life time... in China, I am a strange girl. I am already a nerd. [...] I like to study. Draw. All the time. [...] My Chinese teacher hated that. [...] Because in China, the teacher always told you to write good things about society. And I don't write something bright, like a child. [...] Maybe now it is changing, China is changing, but when I [was there], so... When I get to Japan [...] I thought my life was over [...] but I made something dark in art class [...] As a result I got an A+, A+++++. The best one! The teacher really liked it. [...] I think [here] I can be my way!" (interview No. 25).

⁴⁴³ One male entrepreneur explained that freedom was one of the main reasons he continued to live in Japan, although he now considered moving as freedom was in the process of being increasingly limited due to social reasons but also financial difficulties "What I like in Tokyo is Shibuya, Omotesandō, I want to live according to my own standards, live freely, I can only feel it here. Or in Yoyogi Kōen. There is a bigger park in Chiba, but in Chiba, you need to go there by train. There is disturbance everywhere. There is no freedom in Japan [...] Only in Yoyogi there is unlimited freedom. In Shibuya you can feel free, not without limits, but almost. The freedom... everyone understands, everyone has it, but in Japan, it is the freest place on earth. [...] Until [I founded my own company], I had been able to live freely, I felt like I had no worries, now to live, I need to work, before I worked because I liked it. [...] Politics and society, in bad economic times, the thinking changes" (interview No. 5).

undertheorized, as the term “decision” itself is contested⁴⁴⁴ and the process of arriving at one even more so (see Section 2.2.). According to the Rubicon Model of Action Phases (Achtziger and Gollwitzer 2009: 150) and its application to migration (Kley 2009: 42), with the choice of an option, an agent enters a new stage, the planning stage. While in the previous stage of option evaluation (evaluation of the impact of potential options on primary goals and of their viability), various options are considered and dropped at low psychological cost, once an agent crosses the Rubicon by deciding on a course of action, retracting from that choice comes at a psychological cost, such as feelings of personal failure (see also Lipshitz 1993b: 178).⁴⁴⁵ From the “decision” onwards, an individual starts making concrete plans to work towards his goal (Achtziger and Gollwitzer 2009: 150; Kley 2009: 42).

The agent arrives at his decision by various strategies, among them matching or consequential choice, based on his situation assessment and problem framing. In some cases, these phases are cut short due to the nature of the triggering event, time pressure, the agent’s priorities or his behavioral control.⁴⁴⁶ In the Reasoned Action Approach (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010), if the agent’s behavioral beliefs are positive, i.e., if he believes that a certain behavior (return migration) will lead to a positive outcome, and he believes himself capable of carrying out the behavior as well as external structures and his social network to be in favor of his performing a behavior (normative and control beliefs), he will form an intention to act accordingly. In the logic of subjective expected utility, he is most likely to choose the option that promises the “best” outcome for his (shifting) primary goals, which can mean a satisfactory outcome for a combination of goals, or maximize the utility of a specific goal (March 1994: 18; Simon *et al.* 1992: 37). This can also mean that an agent will delay the decision or choose to maintain the status quo.

⁴⁴⁴ Larry Cochran (1991: 14–15) distinguishes between making a choice or a decision: choosing refers to picking one option over a number of other available options, while decisions refer to a situation of indecision between alternatives. Lipshitz (1993b: 179) also bases his criticism of the term “decision” on the prominence of models of decision making in which agents choose among alternatives, which must not be true in all decision contexts. This becomes especially clear in repeated decision making in which the resulting action is not the result of an active decision but has become routine behavior. In the context of this study, some agents may have “chosen” how to act even without looking at other behavioral options, even though other options might have led to “better” results for the decision maker.

⁴⁴⁵ In most cases, the evaluation of various courses of action is limited to the thoughts of the agent; however, in some cases, he includes other agents in his contemplation (especially when examining family matters). In rare cases, the open discussion with other agents may already come at a cost, if they oppose an option the agent favors.

⁴⁴⁶ Examples include the events of March 11, 2011, but also sudden illness of parents. However, if an agent chooses moving to solve these problems, the decision must not be final, but once the problem is solved or diminished, he may choose to move back again (as after 3/11, many participants returned to Tokyo after spending a few weeks in other places). Another situation in which the decision-making process is cut short is when the agent perceives he has only a limited window of opportunity to cash in on China’s rapid economic development. In all of these scenarios, an agent may shorten or even completely the phase skip situation assessment and cut short the stage of option evaluation.

Strategies in option search and evaluation differ depending on the agent's perception of available time to make the decision. Due to time limitations, but also limited attention span or information, agents evaluate not all potential options in the necessary depth to find the best-fitting solution, thereby reflecting criticism of SEU models and underscoring limited rationality findings. Perceptions of behavioral control as well as norms such as gender role ideology influence how different agents evaluate the same option in similar situations. After picking an option, an agent enters the planning stage and from then on, abandoning the choice comes at a psychological cost, explored in the following section.

5.3 Planning the Behavior, Intervening Factors, and Action(s)

After an agent has made a decision, he enters the planning stage; it is then that he maps out a course of action to reach his newly set goals or to carry out a behavior, that is, he makes concrete plans to work towards his planned behavior (Achtziger and Gollwitzer 2009: 150; Kley 2009: 42). This stage differs from the previous stage in the level of commitment; retracting from his choice comes at a psychological cost for the agent (Kley 2009: 42). In the language of the Reasoned Action Approach (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010), the agent has now formed an *intention* to act in a certain way, to perform a behavior. As intentions predict behavior, unless factual constraints hinder it, the process between having formed an intention and carrying out of the behavior as well as intervening factors are the foci of this subchapter.⁴⁴⁷ It only looks at locational decisions.

If an agent decides to return home, concrete subsequent choices will at the very least include the timing, the booking of a plane ticket, but, more often, also quitting his job, terminating his lease, transferring bank accounts, making travel arrangements and booking or renting accommodation in China, applying for a new job, finding a school for his children etc. These decisions contain the lesser decisions of to where the agent "returns," whether and how he arranges for new employment and housing from Japan or after arrival in China etc. He informs all of his networks contacts directly affected by his decisions if he has not included them in the stage of option evaluation already; this includes immediate and extended family and friends but also contacts from his occupational network, both in Japan and China. All of these lesser actions contribute to return migration behavior, which for the sake of conceptualization, ends with physical relocation in the final stage. However, even if an agent is firmly set on how he plans to carry out a behavior and when, intervening variables may jeopardize either the time frame or the entire behavior. This subchapter first zooms in on the resulting

⁴⁴⁷ As Kalter (1997: 195) points out, this way of structuring the process (using the Reasoned Action Approach) is standard in literature on the connection between attitudes, intentions and behavior.

decisions awaiting a migrant after his choice to return by the example of choice of destination, followed by intervening variables, and finally, if he does perform the behavior as planned, a feedback loop.

5.3.1 *Choosing the Return Destination*

As Tabor (2014: 126) has found, in international migration decisions, the question of whether an agent will move is answered before the question of where is asked. In her study, environmental factors, cultural similarity, migration policy and society's openness towards migrants and quality of life (Tabor 2014: ii) were important for first-time migration. For subsequent mobility behavior, returning "home" (Kennan and Walker 2013) or to a place where a migrant has spent a significant amount of time before will be the preferred choice, or at least considered differently than other potential destinations (DaVanzo 1981: 116).

Depending on the framing and goal of return as based on family, career or lifestyle priorities, some destinations are considered in more depth than others. Due to the specialized nature of the sample's skills, most will prefer to move to "global cities" (Sassen 1991) to be able to use and cash in on the human capital they acquired abroad (Koser and Salt 1997: 290). With migration, an agent is likely to lose some of his location-specific capital in Japan unless he is continuously active in the transnational economy connecting two or more places. He might choose the "new" destination based on location-specific capital there (either because he has lived there before (DaVanzo 1981: 116) or because his network contacts are there and he hopes to benefit from them) but also because of his perception of economic opportunity differentials (industrial policy, availability of credits, density of companies).⁴⁴⁸ If the agent feels responsible for caring for his parents or seeks to include them in child rearing, proximity to their location is another factor to consider.⁴⁴⁹ Even if the agent chooses not to live in the same city,

⁴⁴⁸ As a male entrepreneur puts it: "I don't want to leave Shanghai, really. For work. My human connections [relationship with clients, occupational networks] here are still weak [and] it is a matter of salary. If I go somewhere else, I can't return. And in other places, I can't get a high salary. So I don't really want to work outside of Shanghai" (interview No. 93).

For migrants "returning" to China but not their place of residence before initial migration to Japan, their location-specific capital is likely to be diminished in those new towns, although they possess language and general cultural skills. Language and cultural differences persist between rural and urban areas, but also between urban areas such as Beijing and Shanghai in China.

⁴⁴⁹ A male employee explains his worries about return migration (although he is planning on spending a few more years gaining working experience in academia abroad) as follows: "Traditionally, people have to live with their parents; because of this [system that I can only find work in larger cities], people like me have to live away from their parents, and... I was thinking that if I can buy a big house in the city, then I will pick up my parents and [...] live with my parents, but I don't know whether this will become true, because in Beijing, Shanghai, [in] cities like this it is not easy, and I know many of my contemporaries, they just... they just stay away [from] their parents, so the tradition has been broken

transport connection is another influential factor.⁴⁵⁰ Finally, cultural preferences also play a role.⁴⁵¹ The *hukou* (household registration) system, although problematic for internal labor migrants, did not trouble the participants in their decision of where to go, because local governments try to attract highly skilled through preferential treatment, including permits for (temporary) residence (Li, Li and Chen 2010: 148).⁴⁵² In the sample, 15 agents (35%) “returned” to a city far from their place of origin, while 28 agents (65%) returned at least close to it. Of course, in some cases the location of “return” is part of the “main” decision of returning to China and agents do not consider or evaluate various places separately in terms of place utility (Wolpert 1965).⁴⁵³

up. I think that is the price of globalization or modernization in China, the traditional thinking of living style is changing, is lost. [...] that’s why I want to stay abroad, I want to save some money at this moment and if I can buy a bigger house in Shanghai or Beijing, then I will work there and pick up my parents there to live with me. But I think for most of the people, they cannot manage that, because the real estate in Shanghai and Beijing is booming, it is really expensive, I cannot afford it, and also because one-child-policy, [couples] have four elderly people to support, that is really not easy, my generation is really suffering. [...] actually, I talked with them [my parents], they said, we will not live with you, no way, because first language, they cannot speak Mandarin very fluently, because [...] they have no friends [who] live in the city, they will feel lonely if they move, they enjoy the life even in the *inaka* [countryside], they like it, they enjoy, but I still try... I am still trying to persuade them but I don’t think they will agree with me, but maybe I can pick them up for a while and then go back like this [...]” (interview No. 55).

⁴⁵⁰ A female employee, who had just started working two weeks before the interview, explains: “Really, what I do [for a living], I could also do it in Shanghai or Shenzhen, they might have been better, I could have gotten better offers, so the reason I chose Beijing... my husband is one reason but also I am from the northeastern region, so the customs are a bit different, so coming here is better” (interview No. 110).

⁴⁵¹ A male employee tries to answer this subchapter’s question of how agents decide where to return as follows: “in China, there are many different cultures, economies, there are places where it is rapidly developing and where it is not, they have different thinking, people from different regions are all very different” (interview No. 80).

Of course, agents also combine factors, as did this female academic: “I could choose several places in China, [but] when we choose the location, [...], I was thinking it is better [that] the place, the working place, is close to my homeland, because I am from Zhejiang province, very close to Shanghai, so that is why I when I choose the working place, I will never choose Beijing or other cities far from my hometown. So Shanghai or Hangzhou are my first options. Around this area, there are several universities [...]” (interview No. 82).

⁴⁵² A female PhD student, married with child, explains her choice of “return” location as follows: “We want to go to Shanghai, we think. He has to do with finance, so going to Henan, he wouldn’t find work, but Shanghai is an international city, there are many opportunities, so I think we will go to Shanghai. [...] Yes, [our *hukou*] is in Hebei and Henan, but if we go to Shanghai, we can stay there for several years, you can dissolve the *hukou*, if you go to Shanghai from abroad, it is not a problem, because of this policy. The *hukou* is not really a problem, I think. There is a large working population; it is a policy for the internal migrants, so not really a problem for us” (interview No. 64).

This challenges Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho’s (2010) hypothesis about return migrants from Canada (who were naturalized there), namely “that considerations of the *hukou* system, stipulating access to rights and privileges in China, shape the return migration experience of Mainland Chinese migrants.”

⁴⁵³ This could be the case if the agent has received a job offer or the trigger is a family member’s acute care need, to name but a few potential explanations.

5.3.2 *Intervening Factors*

Intervening factors after a decision has been made are unexpected, while expected obstacles are included in behavioral control, hindering the forming of an intention.⁴⁵⁴ These unexpected obstacles may originate in different fields, from political changes to crises, but also reactions of an agent's social network or career obstacles.⁴⁵⁵ These factors need not necessarily deter the agent from acting upon his intention, but they do lead to a change of plans—the plan may be aborted, the behavior delayed or rushed.

Crises, both economic and environmental (after 3/11), may serve different functions for different migrants; for some, these events trigger the decision-making process, for others, they present an intervening factor after their having formed an intention.⁴⁵⁶ For example, agents may have formed the intention to return to China due to the prolonged economic slump and a lack of career prospects in Japan, yet job offers in China, losing a job in Japan or family-related events may put more pressure on the agent to act quickly.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Gardner (1981: 63) puts it as follows: “If the individual then concludes a move is possible and intends/decides to make a move, it is still possible that unexpected constraints and facilitators may be operating which, because of imperfect knowledge and perception, had previously been ignored” (underlined in original).

⁴⁵⁵ De Jong and Fawcett (1981: 56) enumerate a number of intervening factors that are applicable at this point in the decision-making process; among the unexpected constraints that are not included in the forming of a migration intention are changes in health or family structure (e.g., death in the family).

⁴⁵⁶ This seems like a conceptual ambiguity, as for some migrants who had decided to settle in Japan, the event of 3/11 has triggered a decision-making process revisiting that decision. At the same time, one could argue that the same event could be an intervening factor in the intention to settle. This ambiguity is in part due to the temporal dimension of migration and settling down. In the case of intervening factors, they apply if the concretely defined behavior has not yet been carried out. In the case of someone who has already formed the intention to move, 3/11 is not the trigger to a new decision-making process but an intervening factor potentially speeding up the process of return. In that case, the intention to move remains and is not revisited, but 3/11 leads to a reconsideration of the sub-decision of the timing. Due to the complexity of migration decisions (whether, where and when to move), this seeming ambiguity is inherent in the decision-making process. Another way of looking at it is to see the decision to settle as a behavior that is currently carried out; agents are no longer in the stages of option evaluation or planning, but are in a feedback loop of the decision to not change locations again (locational inaction). Both cases are addressed in Section 5.1.1.2.

⁴⁵⁷ A male entrepreneur explains that there were a number of reasons why he had already formed the intention to return before unemployment sped up the process, among them: “the Japanese economic situation was getting worse and worse. [...] The image of Chinese got worse and worse; that is another problem. [...] and also my parents, they are getting old, I am old.” However, the reason he finally returned was, “because of the bubble, in the end, I was let go,” concluding that “the work was the largest problem among the reasons” (interview No. 93).

In the case of a male employee in the field of IT who had spent seven years in Japan (in university and gaining working experience), he had formed the intention to return and had been looking for jobs in China, getting in touch with companies. The intended timing of return was moved up due to an offer he received through a head-hunting company (interview No. 76).

After making a decision, an agent communicates his planned behavior to his immediate and extended network. This might be only for the purpose of information, but may also be an attempt to cash in on his social capital; an agent uses his network to receive information on career opportunities or housing options or other tips to smooth the transition. If he has not included network contacts of special importance to him in forming the intention to move, their negative reaction might provide an obstacle to his performing the behavior. His employer could refuse to let him go before his contract is fulfilled, his spouse could refuse to accept relocation etc. These obstacles might lead only to delaying the behavior, but also to changing or aborting the plan.⁴⁵⁸ However, the positive reaction of his social network contacts could also lead to a speeding up of the process, for example, if they are able to provide a job offer. Despite the firm intention to carry out a decision, the “detail” question of finding an apartment or a job (e.g. for the spouse) etc. may delay the move.⁴⁵⁹

In the drawn-out process of migration and frequent reconsiderations about the timing of return migration, time is of particular importance when trying to predict behavior from attitudes and intentions. Most participants enter Japan with the firm intention to return after spending a set time frame there. The longer the time frame between forming an intention and the planned point in time for carrying out the behavior, the less accurate a prediction of behavior becomes.

5.4 Feedback Loop

Once a behavior is put into action, an agent enters a feedback loop. The initial migration decision of going to Japan creates a feedback loop that lasts for years. During that time, the decision is checked several times for its effects on the agent’s primary goals. As long as the agent is not willing to make another locational decision or sees his goal of migration as accomplished and therefore does not want to make the consequential choice to return or to “correct” the initial migration decision by returning to China,⁴⁶⁰ he will make other decisions to improve the compatibility of his locational decision with his goals; taking up a different job, entering clubs, sending remittances, etc. His original decision can also be amended

⁴⁵⁸ Even if an agent has formed the intention to return to China with his family, a spouse’s disapproval could lead to a (temporary) separation and thereby amendment of the plan, or induce the agent to abandon his plan altogether.

⁴⁵⁹ Kley (2009: 143) gives the hypothetical example of a student looking for an apartment in a different city but has to refrain from moving due to a lack of funds to meet the costs of life in his preferred destination. However, the likelihood that these factors retain a migrant from returning home is rather small as he can rely on his social network to provide him with information on available jobs and stay with family or friends while looking for affordable accommodation.

⁴⁶⁰ See Dumont and Spielvogel (2008) and Cassarino (2004) for the notion of “corrective” moves, for example, if a migrant fails to integrate in the host country.

in the sense that a planned stay years is extended. When the end of the set time frame draws near, he follows the traced steps in the decision process starting with situation assessment. When agents return to their home countries, they (re)enter a (if only slightly) changed social, political and economic context, and they themselves have changed in terms of skills, but potentially also expectations. New housing, new working environments and potentially a new town make (re)integration processes necessary. With return migration, agents enter another feedback loop and the decision-making process starts over. The decision-making model of this study is designed for (in the perception of agents) long-term decisions, that is, decisions agents do not intend to change quickly. With ample time to analyze their initial situation and choose a behavior to improve their lives, some agents decide on return migration. Upon return, they will therefore make small-scale decisions to improve their lives and not immediately consider return to Japan as a valid option. Therefore, a new decision-making cycle in which international relocation is included is only likely to happen after specific types of triggers start a new decision-making process. Yet, if return migration is the result of a decision-making process under time pressure, an agent will directly assess his situation, check for his satisfaction levels in different life spheres, potentially correcting his rushed locational decision. Generally, depending on the overarching goal of return, agents may be willing to compromise in other areas of life.⁴⁶¹

Agents will ponder the “correctness” of their decisions (both to leave China and to return); dissatisfaction or regret may be the result of this assessment (Janis and Mann 1979: 10–11). Dissatisfaction with one’s decision can be the result of “ineffective attention management and inadequate problem detection” (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 339). Hollnagel (2007: 8–9) identified eight types of decision “failures” that lead to regret, of which five could be applicable to migration decisions: wrong timing, duration, speed, direction of action or object.⁴⁶² In the following two paragraphs, these “decision failures” will be checked for applicability in the sample for the initial and return migration decision.

In the initial migration decision to move to Japan, an agent may feel that he moved abroad at the wrong point in time (wrong timing),⁴⁶³ stayed in Japan too

⁴⁶¹ This is the case of one female employee who returned to China to take care of her ageing mother but who prefers life in Japan. She felt it was and still is her duty to take care of her mother, yet in terms of her career, she expresses strong regrets about her return: “If I still were in Japan, I could work as a counselor, on the lowest level, but I could study for my career. I could work and volunteer [...], feel needed [...]” (interview No. 108).

⁴⁶² The other three decision failures concern distance, sequence and pressure (Hollnagel 2007: 9).

⁴⁶³ Younger migrants explain how career chances for Chinese migrants to Japan differ upon return but also in Japan. The former point refers to the difficulty of finding suitable employment due to tough competition from returnees from the U.S. and the necessity for working experience in Japan to distinguish oneself from the large number of returnees from Japan. The latter point refers to Japan’s continuing economic slump, which makes it harder to build a career in Japan and potentially to find a job in the transnational economy. In addition to the evaluation of the migration decision as suffering from wrong timing, this evaluation may lead to regretting the initial relocation decision itself, as

long or not long enough (duration),⁴⁶⁴ made the locational choice too quickly without considering an alternative (speed),⁴⁶⁵ picked the wrong destination country (direction),⁴⁶⁶ or picked the wrong alternative between moving and not moving.⁴⁶⁷ Thinking that one has made the wrong choice in any of those areas need not lead to a “correction” of the underlying locational decision. Although aspects of life could potentially have turned out subjectively “better,” this does not mean that the choice is evaluated as completely wrong and worthy of regret, as it has shaped the agent’s life and may have brought him new perspectives.⁴⁶⁸

exemplified by the following case: A male employee from IT compares his situation to his brother’s, who has stayed behind in China, while the participant went to Japan for 10 years to get a degree (and gain working experience once he realized that he would need it to find a high-ranking job on the Chinese labor market): “No, unlike me, he stayed in China. He doesn’t like foreign countries. We are very different, he is a business man, and looking at him now, I went to Japan and back, but he is higher than me, in the past 10 years, China rapidly developed. Compared to Japan, it is better to stay in China. Of course, I gained knowledge, but... he now has his company” (interview No. 76).

⁴⁶⁴ Some of the participants expressed that staying in Japan for too long hindered their chance to become part of the rapid Chinese development. In the case of a female academic who spent nine years in Japan and is anxious to graduate and to go back to be reunited with her child at the time of the interview, other implications of staying too long become clear: “If I had gotten the degree after three years, I should have gone home then, China is developing super fast, when we go back, the way of thinking has changed, it doesn’t match anymore, so if you are in Japan for long, the culture is different, you adapt to the Japanese thinking, and in interviews, I often return for that, but I don’t know anymore how people communicate back home. I forget how people say hi, it bothers me. When we eat, in terms of drinking the customs are really different, I can’t do it anymore. I am in the middle of Japan and China, it is a little lonely. I haven’t gotten used to Japan, but can’t get used to China, either. So I think it is best to only study abroad for four years, then you remember Chinese culture and learn enough Japanese culture to move between the two cultures” (interview No. 64).

⁴⁶⁵ A male entrepreneur in the finance industry explains his feelings about his choice to go to Japan as follows: “[If I could do it all over again], I think I would study more and then go to the U.S., I didn’t know the difference between Japan and the U.S. [when I made the decision to leave China], so I thought Japan would be ok, too. I didn’t think about it deeply. Going to Japan or going to the U.S., thinking about that was annoying, so I just went to one place.” He goes on to explain how returnees from Japan have less career chances in China: “If only I had stayed in China, or gone to the U.S., life would have been different, compared to Ryūgakusei returning from the U.S., people who have gone to Japan in China have more difficulties doing things here [due to the small number of Japanese companies]. European companies, they send people to China, use Chinese bosses, but Japanese companies don’t do that, because they think Japanese should be on top. So even if you studied in Japan, you cannot get that position” (interview No. 112).

⁴⁶⁶ As a male employee from the field of finance explains: “Was it a good decision that I went to Japan? I can’t say. It is ok that I went, but if I had gone to the U.S., if I had gone somewhere else, I would have a better position on the Chinese labor market. Maybe Europe, or so. Maybe even Singapore or Hong Kong. If I had gone to the U.S., or Australia, my value would be very different” (interview No. 101).

⁴⁶⁷ A male entrepreneur expresses that “for Chinese, it is a two faced coin. Had China not developed as fast, [the thinking would be different in that] Chinese in Japan and in Europe, they get lots of money, people at home would be jealous, definitely in terms of salary, but now, in the past 10 years, the friends who are still in China, their situation has gotten so much better. If only I had stayed behind, then I could be as high up as them! Why are they now in a better situation than me?” (interview No. 29).

⁴⁶⁸ A male employee expresses that he does not want to look at the decision to go to Japan as good or bad, because at the time he made the choice, it seemed to be the right one. However, as far as the duration (7 years) is concerned, he does have some regrets: “It is difficult to evaluate whether it was a

How the decision to return is evaluated depends in part on the goals of initial migration;⁴⁶⁹ evaluation is likely to differ if return is a corrective move or was part of the plan at that point in time from the beginning. Although most participants plan on returning from the very beginning of their migration experience in Japan, agents evaluate the return decision separately, at least the timing of return and its impact on primary goals.⁴⁷⁰ Applied to the Hollnagel's (2007: 9) decision failures, an agent may have returned at the wrong point in time (wrong timing),⁴⁷¹ made decision to return too quickly without considering an alternative (speed),⁴⁷² or he

good or bad decision to return to China. I can't change it anyway. My parents now say: aren't you regretting it, you could've made more money in China, don't you regret it? No, I don't, at that time, it was the right choice. So saying whether it is good or bad, is difficult to say. I had a good experience. If it was 2001 again, I would make the same choice, [but] it was too long. I had the plan of staying three years, so given the chance again, I would return after three years, that would have been better for my career [...] but that is the course of my life, it was good that I started over again, doesn't matter whether that was in Japan or somewhere else" (interview No. 103).

A male entrepreneur, who expressed feelings of jealousy over the status of his Chinese network contacts who had stayed in China, also explains: "If I hadn't come to Japan, maybe I would have become somebody in the company before I came to Japan. But that is not the important thing, I think the important thing is that I know what freedom is. Therefore, my plan of the future is just about how I can become a little free, make a living easily and the live the life I like" (interview No. 29).

⁴⁶⁹ In Luo, Guo and Huang's study (2003: 103) they asked the returnees about levels of satisfaction and changes in income. More than one third claimed that their income had decreased and only 13.6% had a higher income (the respondents compared their income to their own income before their return). Comparing themselves to co-workers, half declared that they earn about as much as their co-workers without international experience, one third said it was higher and only 4% reported it to be much higher (Luo, Guo and Huang 2003: 103).

⁴⁷⁰ This refers to the questions of whether they stayed in Japan long enough or too long and whether their timing deprived them of career chances in China; many participants refer to a sense of urgency to be part of the Chinese economic "miracle."

⁴⁷¹ One male employee who had gone to the U.S. after studying law in Japan, explains his initial regrets about his choice of timing to return to China in 2006 as follows: "In 2005, I was quite happy with my life in the U.S. [...] After a couple of years [working at a law firm], I thought I was ready to open my own practice, so some friends in a similar situation, [...] we decided to open our own firm [...]. At the same time, a friend of mine was at [current company in China] and he said we are looking for a guy who can speak Japanese and I think you are the best person for this [...] and I got a really good offer [...] so I thought about it and decided to go back to China, now is the time, and work for an international firm. [...] The first two years, honestly, I regret my coming back, because the people, the team I left behind, they opened an office and in the second year, the guys were driving Land Rovers, BMW, in China, I had no car, no apartment, that was kind of a big gap in the first 2-3 years, their business became booming for a number of years, and then in 2008, when the economic crisis started, those guys suffered really a lot, they were suffering to survive, but my life becomes brighter, so really, you can't tell for the short term. So for now, I think I made the right decision" (interview No. 78). This quote points to the importance of time in the evaluation of decisions; also, it is interesting that this particular agent chose locational inaction despite negative situation assessment upon return.

⁴⁷² This was the case for some of the participants after the events of 3/11. Some participants left Japan quickly, but returned after a few weeks when classes resumed or companies called them back to Japan. Although for some agents this led to a "permanent" relocation to China, others "corrected" their rushed decision to return to China once they entered the feedback loop beginning with situation assessment, closely watching shifting environments (e.g., new information of health risks).

could have gone to the wrong place when returning (direction of action).⁴⁷³ Most interviewees (men in particular)⁴⁷⁴ were satisfied overall with their decision to return, even if reintegration into Chinese society and working life took longer than they expected.⁴⁷⁵ Satisfaction depended also on the expectations associated with return (and reasons for leaving Japan); agents expected career fulfillment, acknowledgement and responsibility (Luo, Guo and Huang 2003: 103–104).⁴⁷⁶ Few participants consider leaving China again, underlining their understanding

⁴⁷³ A few agents “returned” to one place but quickly decided to move somewhere else in China. This is the case if agents returned to take care of ageing parents; once they fulfilled their duties, they were free to choose a location better suited to their career preferences. In a male employee’s case, he went to Northeast China through network connections, but decided to relocate to Shanghai six months later for career reasons: “First I worked in Dalian at a bank, but the system was different for Japan and China, in Japan you get good bonuses for working at banks, it is a respected job, but in China it is different. At first I did not understand this difference, I came back and worked at the bank, but then I couldn’t really get used to the difference, so I thought I’d switch and find a job I really want to do. And I came to Shanghai” (interview No. 90).

⁴⁷⁴ This becomes clear in an interview with a male employee of a Japanese financial company, who explains: “I was in Japan during the earthquake, the earthquakes bother me, and the work here is more fun, and life in Japan, it is easy to be successful in terms of business, in Japan, working there, competing with Japanese is really tough” (interview No. 104).

⁴⁷⁵ This is exemplified by the case of a female entrepreneur who returned in 2007 after 18 years in Japan to be reunited with her husband and children who had left for China a few years earlier.

Q: “Why did you not go back together?”

A: “Because I liked Japan! [...] it was rough [being separated from my husband and child]. But I like working. At that time in Japan I had worked here for 10+ years, so all of my clients, experience and contacts were in Japan. If I had returned, I wouldn’t have had anything in Beijing. The saddest thing was, in the end, my children, my family, they are in Beijing, so I had to return. When I came back, I had no friends, my university friends, were all in the IT business, they were all in the U.S., Germany, six people were in Japan, but in Beijing there was only one guy. So when I came back, I bought a phone, but I did not have anyone I could call. So that is why I didn’t want to return” (interview No. 120 already introduced in the subsection on Career Preferences in Section 5.2.2.2). In Luo, Guo and Huang’s (2003: 103) study, 79.1% of returnees had no difficulties adapting to living in China, while those over 40 had more problems, which the scholars connect to returnees’ family responsibilities. Among the problems encountered, Luo, Guo and Huang (2003: 110) cite “re-adjusting to life in China, children’s education, corruption and an inefficient bureaucratic system.”

⁴⁷⁶ Of senior professionals, 28.8% were satisfied with their position in the work place, 18.8% of associate professionals, but in management, 47% were satisfied; Luo, Guo and Huang (2003: 104) find gender differences in the positions men and women achieve upon return: “China is a traditional society in which men are considered the leaders of society and major breadwinners in the family. Although our respondents came from overseas and most of them had earned at least a Master’s degree, the gender difference in terms of managerial position was still noticeable” (see also Cooke 2011 for different career outcomes of men and women in China). In addition to the improvement of individual lives, return migration is hypothesized to also impact home societies (Cassarino 2004: 269). Although this was not addressed in the present study, Luo (2003: 301) finds that more than a fourth of the participants in his sample thought to have made a “positive impact on social transformation in terms of introducing western culture, ideals and values, as well as international business practices and rules,” although 10% felt they did not have strong influence. The feelings of influence differed by occupation and was generally less in academia and stronger for persons in managerial positions.

that “China” is “home.”⁴⁷⁷ Reasons for this attitude could include beneficial structural factors such as economic growth and favorable policies for returnees in China, close social network contacts but also cultural preferences of returnees, combining the three spheres hypothesized influential in migration decision making: career, family and lifestyle preferences.

5.5 Interim Discussion

This chapter on the decision-making process (potentially) leading to the outcome of return migration provided qualitative explanations to the question of why some agents stick to their original (return) migration intention and others do not. It traced the stages in the decision-making process, zooming in on situation analysis, option evaluation, planning action and the feedback loop. Depending on the type of event and its perception by the agent, the sequence of phases in the stage of situation analysis differs: in the absence of time pressure, agents assess their situation and either identify underlying problems or set new goals. For unexpected events that seem to create time pressure, the agent forms a mental image based on his understanding of an evolving situation and its impact on his primary goals, cuts short the stage of option evaluation and swiftly makes a decision.

In addition to contributing to the understanding of the process, of the *how* of decision-making, further analysis adds explanations to the question of *why* return migration happens. Differences both in the framing of similar problems and in the perceptions of behavioral control of agents in similar situations explain diverse outcomes for various agents. Decisions that lead to return migration are only seldom qualitatively analyzed; quantitative studies focus on the impact of a number of factors, while the process is overlooked. Only a focus on the process of decision making can explain why and when it is that agents deviate from their original migration intention, leading to a shortened or lengthened stay. Any number of events can lead to a reconsideration of locational decisions, but the outcome of these decision-making processes need not be migration. Decision-

⁴⁷⁷ Two students, who had done an exchange year in Japan, came back to do their master’s degree in Japan after finishing their Bachelor’s degree in China. Six spent time in other countries than Japan before returning to China to receive further education or gain working experience, however, all six plan to stay in China. About a third of the overall sample considers gaining further experience in third countries, but all seek to settle in China (or Japan in 10 cases). Reasons to go abroad are limited to career considerations. This, however, is related to sampling choices; no interviews were conducted in the U.S. (by far the most common destination of choice) to check how these temporary plans might change with time. Another reason is the age structure of the sample; agents in tertiary education and the early stages of their careers are more likely to be mobile, and mobility rates increase again with retirement (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008: 163).

making models that can be applied to migration decisions (Tabor 2014)⁴⁷⁸ have been designed for expert decision making under time pressure and not necessarily real-life long-term decisions. The model of a decision-making process in this chapter addresses this gap by focusing on (usually) long-term decision-making processes of highly skilled Chinese migrants in Japan. It adds to the understanding of migration and of decision making in the following four ways.

a) Redefinition of Stages and Phases

The decision-making process begins with situation analysis, triggered by an expected or unexpected event. In the specific case of return migration, this trigger is often the end of a set time frame, a factor so far largely neglected in the literature on real-life decisions. In the author's conceptualization of the (return migration) decision-making process, an agent acts within a feedback loop of his original decision to move to Japan. When the end of a set time frame draws near, an agent assesses his current situation in one or more spheres. He is very likely to appraise his level of goal achievement in the sphere that was the reason for his initial migration decision; in most cases, that sphere was the career sphere. He may also take a more comprehensive look and include his levels of satisfaction in the spheres of family and lifestyle preferences in this phase. Depending on the trigger, other spheres may take center stage; if the trigger is child birth, an assessment of the family sphere may precede other assessments. In previous publications on decision making the phases of situation assessment and problem definition were one. This is true of situations of time pressure in which the problem seems easily identifiable; in prolonged decision-making processes about migration, though, an agent takes a more comprehensive look at his levels of satisfaction in various spheres, only then to move on to a more precise problem definition or to setting new goals. The phase of situation assessment, a rather superficial appraisal of goal achievement and satisfaction, therefore directly impacts the following phase of problem definition or of setting new goals, making an analytical separation of the phases necessary. Based on his levels of satisfaction, he either sets new goals (in one or more spheres) or moves on to the phase of problem definition, in which he analyzes the circumstances creating dissatisfaction, identifying one or more underlying problems. This conceptualization supports findings from Social Production Functions theory, in that agents choose a particular behavior in order to improve their lives "depending on the overarching goal that is focal at a given moment" (Lindenberg and Steg 2013: 40). Agents choose how to produce the overarching goals of physical and social well-being by reaching instrumental goals (status, behavioral confirmation and affection on the one hand, stimulation and comfort on the other), which can be substituted (Lindenberg 1996). How to reach

⁴⁷⁸ This excludes CDM theory that focuses on decisions between available alternatives and analytical information processing tested in laboratory experiments (Lipshitz *et al.* 2001: 333).

these instrumental goals differs for various groups. In the conceptualization of this study, migration is a tool to achieve these instrumental goals; whether agents choose migration depends on problem definition and framing as well as option evaluation.

This process of problem definition and framing is prone to error due to limited information, bias or lack of thoroughness, directly impacting the stage of option evaluation. If the underlying problem is wrongly identified, the options may only superficially solve them, leading to dissatisfaction in the feedback loop and “corrections” of decisions, potentially to more invasive options in the long term. Starting with the stage of option evaluation, the model reproduces processes identified in the literature; agents satisfice and form intentions based on their perceptions of behavioral control. It differs, though, in the interpretation of intervening factors and factual constraints: Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) view factual constraints as partially included in the perception of behavioral control and only coming in again as intervening factors hindering the carrying out of a behavior once an agent has formed an intention. In the model, factual constraints are included in the evaluation of options in the form of external opportunity structures, and only unexpected factors are included as intervening factors leading to terminating, postponing or speeding up of carrying out a behavior, thereby refining the function of intervening variables.

b) Sequence of Phases Depending on the Type of Event

Return migration may be the outcome of decision-making processes triggered by any number of events, if those lead to a reconsideration of locational decisions and the agent sees his goals as better achievable in a different location. However, the process of how he arrives at that decision differs by the type of event and specifically, whether he perceives time pressure to act or not. In the sample, this was best exemplified by the unexpected event of 3/11. If an agent perceived the situation surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant following the earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011, as a direct threat to his own or his family’s health, he did not enter a phase of situation assessment about his levels of satisfaction in several spheres. Instead, he formed a mental model of the evolving situation and simulated the impact of only a few available options on the goal of physical well-being (Type B decision). After carrying out the chosen behavior, an agent still enters a feedback loop, in which he goes through the stages of the regular decision-making process, assessing his situation in a more structured way, potentially “correcting” his initial reactive behavior. The process must not necessarily resemble this conceptualization after every type of unexpected event: if the event is sudden unemployment, an agent, depending on his perception of time pressure to act (whether there is an immediate threat to his livelihood or whether he has enough savings to be able to look for a better fitting job), may still

enter a phase of situation assessment and go through the phases of the regular (Type A) decision-making process. In that case, the event may serve to highlight areas of dissatisfaction and in the stage of option evaluation, an agent may consider return movement, but also changing his occupation or placing more emphasis on job security in his next employment decision etc.

c) Importance of Time in Return Migration Decision-Making Processes

Time is of importance to the model in many ways. Both decision-making processes and migration happen over time, in changing circumstances and evolving priorities of the individual agent.⁴⁷⁹ Firm intentions to return or settle may waver over the years, but also from one moment to another as a reaction to a life-changing event that induces the agent to rethink his priorities and ways to act accordingly. If behavior is the result of intentions as determined by behavioral, normative and control beliefs unless external factors intervene (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010), time plays a role as structural factors may change (level of development, policies, norms) and with life phases, the power of an individual in the household but also in his career changes, too. Priorities as well as goals and the ability to negotiate one's preferred way of achieving them change over the life course. The content of considerations relevant for migration decisions therefore varies over time, as does the process (of negotiation, for example).

However, time also influences the interpretation of events as triggers or intervening factors in the decision-making process. Whether an event is interpreted as either one depends on the time horizon of the intention, its firmness, or whether it is a behavior that constitutes a change or serves to keep the status quo. If an agent has formed the intention to return to China within a set time frame and has started planning his return and then an event keeps him from carrying out the behavior, the event will be considered an intervening factor and the plan is aborted. Nevertheless, a situation assessment ensues of how else an agent can improve the areas of life he sought to advance with returning. If an agent, in contrast, has formed the intention to stay in Japan for some time, thereby already carrying out his decision, an event that makes him reconsider this decision is considered a trigger.

The length of the decision-making process and its various phases differ most obviously by perceived time pressure, but also individually by character (risk-taking propensity, confidence), number of negotiators, speed of finding alternative

⁴⁷⁹ As Hollnagel (2002: 152) puts it: "there is limited time available to evaluate events, to plan what to do, and to do it. Secondly, [...] the information that is used needs to be updated and verified regularly because the world is changing." This is in line with the basic premises of NDM research of time pressure and changing environments.

employment and housing etc.⁴⁸⁰ In most cases, agents waver between different behavioral options before deciding on a course of behavior. “Flawed” decisions can be the result of a trade-off between thoroughness in the phases of situation assessment, problem definition and option evaluation as well as planning action. As decisions come about in the interplay of action and assessing the impact of one’s actions, problems caused by high-impact life decisions can be corrected by smaller-scale actions in various life spheres during the feedback loop.

d) Return Migration Is Only One Solution Among Many

Previous publications on (return) migration, in overlooking the processes of decision-making, have treated return migration or settlement as the only potential option—yet, to which problems they were the solution, or to reach which goals they were the behavioral alternatives, was left open. Section 5.1 highlighted the variety of problems to which return migration may be an option (Section 5.2). The decision-making process, especially the phases of problem definition and framing and of option evaluation, make clear that locational decisions have a strong impact on agents’ lives and are therefore usually made after careful consideration of the impact of this solution on primary goals. Depending on the definition and framing of a problem, an agent may overlook less intrusive options; in many cases, however, agents might prefer smaller steps to improve their lives in Japan. Whether an agent chooses return migration not only depends on his understanding and framing of the problem, but also his perception of behavioral control. It is necessary to look at the individual agent, at gender, position in the household, norms, individual priorities etc. to explain differences in outcomes for agents faced with similar problems. In order to explain return migration, the inclusion of initial goals of migration (both in terms of contents and time frame), triggers to the decision-making process, changing priorities over the course of migration, dynamic environments, life phase transitions, etc. is inevitable. The trigger that agents expected to lead to movement, most prominently the end of a set time frame, need not lead to return migration, but other events might.

Limits of the study exist in that not all triggers that lead to a decision-making process that includes migration as a potential option are depicted due to its methodology, specifically, agents were only asked for decisive triggers. Findings on the impact of specific triggers can be derived from the discrepancy in expected and decisive triggers in both returnees and those participants considering migration; yet, more knowledge about the circumstances under which migration

⁴⁸⁰ Agents were not asked about the time it took them to complete the various stages of the decision-making process. Luo, Guo and Huang (2003: 101–102) found that it took the half of their sample less than six months, for 16.7% of the sample it took each 6–12 months, 1–2 years and over two years.

is excluded in option evaluation is desirable to explain return migration.⁴⁸¹ Only limited information about the *process* of problem definition, the identification of options, their evaluation, and the choice of option could be gathered from the qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews; however, to explain return migration, contents and outcomes of these considerations are more valuable. This chapter highlighted contents, constraints and facilitators in the decision-making process, thereby adding to the understanding of why some agents deviate from their original intentions and others do not. Chapter 6 adds a quantitative analysis of decisive factors for various agents.

⁴⁸¹ However, in this study, the data base to draw significant conclusions based on a comparison between various triggers and the ensuing decision-making process is lacking.

6 Results: Impact of Three Spheres on Migrants' Locational Decisions

This chapter presents the contents of decision-making processes about the specific option of relocation. It displays results of the study, zooming in on the three spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences that comprise the decisive and influential factors in participants' locational decisions. Participants of the study are in a feedback loop of their initial decision to move to Japan, more than two thirds originally intended to stay only temporarily. At certain points in the migration process (see Section 5.1.1), participants reevaluate their locational decision. This chapter attempts to answer the questions of why some agents return and when, while others stay, including the underlying puzzle of why some agents adhere to their original intention while others deviate from it. The study examines decisive and influential factors in locational decision-making processes, differentiating by whether agents have already made the decision to return or stay or are still pondering it, and looks at how these factors differ in importance for various agents. The sample is divided by gender but also phase in the career- and family-related life course as well as occupation.

In the literature, return migration is generally explained by achieving or failing to reach the goal of migration, lack of integration in the host or the preference for one's home country (Cassarino 2004; Dumont and Spielvogel 2008). While aspects of this argumentation can be found among participants, this conceptualization leaves out the aspect of time, assuming that goals of migration but also migrants' priorities and perceptions of the situation in home and host country and its impact on goal achievement are static. As Castles and Miller (2009: 20) point out, over the course of migration the original plan may be modified, therefore the ability to accurately predict behavior from intention decreases over time (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 42).⁴⁸² While the previous chapter examined the *process* of arriving at locational decisions, this chapter addresses the rationale for the whether and when of return migration as well as the gap in intention and behavior by focusing on decisive and influential factors in locational decisions and their timing for various groups.

In explanations of mobility behavior, migration theory has long been divided by disciplines, lacking an integrating or interdisciplinary perspective (Brettell and

⁴⁸² While most participants (69% of the sample) migrate with a set time frame in mind, 43% of these participants deviate from it (of these 45% shorten, 55% extend their stays).

Hollifield 2000: 2; Massey *et al.* 1994: 700–701). Next to the strong focus on economic explanations (Kröhnert 2007; Massey *et al.* 1993: 432–434; Piore 1979; Sjaastad 1962; Todaro 1969), scholars are increasingly also focusing on family issues in migration (Adams 2004; Chiang and Hsu 2005; Cooke 2008; de Haas and Fokkema 2010; Harbison 1981; Lawson 1998; Michielin, Mulder and Zorlu 2008; Tabor 2014; Willis and Yeoh 2000), while the research on the influence of lifestyle preferences on migration behavior remains underresearched (Benson and O’Reilly 2009; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014). Results of this study reflect these three different angles to explain migration, yet the study attempts to integrate them as all influence locational decision-making processes.⁴⁸³ The three spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences hold goals, problems, facilitating and hindering factors crucial to the decision-making process. While in Section 6.1 a look at decisive reasons for locational decisions in the sample reveals that career and family are most often mentioned, almost all participants refer also to lifestyle preferences as influential in their decisions. As is shown in the following sections, the study redefines “economic” reasons in locational decision making to designate mainly career considerations and differentiates both the influence of various family members on the one hand and of lifestyle preferences by individual objectives, identity and lifestyle factors on the other.

The impact of these spheres is hypothesized to differ for various agents. As pointed out by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980: 42), the firmness of intentions and the ability to predict behavior from an intention decrease over time. About 88% of participants enter Japan as students, and many make the transition into working life there. Over the course of migration and especially during life phase transitions, the firmness of the original intention is bound to vary. In fact, Kley (2011) has found that at life phase transitions, the likelihood to consider migration rises. Life events include not only changes in household composition but also the beginnings and ends of education and employment (Kley 2011; Kley and Mulder 2010; Mulder 1993; Wagner 1989). Therefore, Section 6.2 examines the influence of various factors on participants in different phases in their family and working lives, integrating the two with the concept of parallel careers (Willekens 1991; 1987). Over the life course, the perception of where goals are easier to achieve often varies not only due to changing priorities but also altered environments in

⁴⁸³ As one of the scholars who have attempted to integrate factors from different spheres, Beshers already pointed out in 1967 that household composition and gender, labor market structure and characteristics of the occupation as well as housing markets influence mobility decisions. In De Jong and Fawcett’s (1981: 47–57) explanation, migrants form a migration intention based on personally valued goals (wealth, status, affiliation, comfort, stimulation, autonomy and morality) and subjective probability. This subjective utility model entails that agents are likely to move if they see their goals as better achievable elsewhere. As Gardner (1981) also points out in his model of migration decision making, the perception of place-related factors and their impact on goal realization is important, yet a number of scholars have pointed out that knowing of the opportunity differentials alone does not influence behavior (Kalter 1997; Kley 2011: 472–473; Huinink and Kley 2008).

home and host country since outmigration. In addition, agents' perceptions of influential factors in locational decisions are likely to differ by gender. As a result of gender role ideology that influences both family and working lives, men and women face different hurdles and may set different priorities in their locational decisions (Bielby and Bielby 1992; Cooke 2008; Kofman and Raghuram 2005; Pessar 1998; Willis and Yeoh 2000).⁴⁸⁴ An analysis of participants' responses shows that there are differences in the spheres agents cite as decisive for locational decisions, yet, men and women frame family influences differently: while women refer directly to their role as emotional caregivers to their families and citing family factors as decisive, men stress their roles as providers to their families, thereby referring to a wider group of factors including the ability to provide materially, but also stressing education, for example. The sample is divided by occupation in the last part of Section 6.2, because the perception of structural factors such as labor demand, level of technology or upward mobility is likely to differ by occupation (Mahroum 2000; Solimano 2008).

From the literature review, several assumptions can be generated for this study. It is expected that with more time spent in Japan, participants become more likely to deviate from their original migration intention. A life course perspective suggests that life events may lead to a reevaluation of the original intention potentially leading to a deviation, while a focus on original goals of the movement implies that once goals are reached or the migrant reevaluates them as unachievable in Japan, he will return. Building on the results from the previous chapter on the process of locational decision making, these perspectives remain only on the surface and do not touch upon the core of the rationales for return migration or settlement. Once agents have reached the original goals of migration, they may choose to set new goals in the destination country. Life events such as childbirth lead to a reconsideration of place utility in the light of shifted priorities, potentially resulting in a decision to stay in the destination country or to return prematurely. Neither perspective, taken out of the context of the individual migrant, can therefore explain by itself why migrants return or stay.

As most participants (about 88%) enter Japan as students aiming to increase their career chances, career considerations are expected to take center stage earlier in the migration process. The following hypotheses about their priorities can be generated: young agents are probably single, stressing the goals of evolving personally, focusing on their career and caring for their parents in the future. With life phase transitions, when entering stable employment and relationships, priorities are likely to shift towards career *and* family. With child birth, the well-being of the child, ensured through safety, parents' stable employment but also time resources and good education, becomes important. For the participants of the study, it could be observed that both family and career factors are crucial to

⁴⁸⁴ See Section 2.1.3 on the influence of gender (role ideology) on migrants' experiences.

ensuring physical and social well-being, the overarching goals in Lindenberg's (1996) Social Production Functions theory (see also Lindenberg and Steg 2013).⁴⁸⁵ Work provides the resources to ensure physical well-being by achieving the instrumental goal of comfort,⁴⁸⁶ while the inclusion into supportive family structures helps to gain affection, an instrumental goal for social well-being (Ormel *et al.* 1999: 67). If the two pillars of career and family are stable and instrumental goals seem achievable to a similar extent in both Japan and China, agents are likely to put a stronger weight on lifestyle preferences in locational decisions, tipping the scale towards China or Japan if they are willing to relocate.

Not only do priorities change over the life course, perceptions of where shifting goals are achievable evolve over the course of migration. Relocation means that agents are usually taken out of their comfort zone, separated from supportive social networks and living in unfamiliar territory. While imagining spending their entire lives in Japan seems extreme for most participants initially, over time, perceptions of positive and negative factors in Japan and in China become more nuanced and the proposition of spending more time abroad becomes less improbable. This process differs individually: it depends on location-specific capital (DaVanzo 1981: 116; DaVanzo and Morrison 1982: 4), both in the sense of networks that can be used for career achievement but also emotional comfort (Achenbach 2015), levels of integration and differentiation in social networks. Therefore, time also plays a role in locational decisions. This goes beyond difficult predictions of behavior from intention the more time lies between the intention and the intended behavior or the fact that the likelihood to consider migration increases at life phase transitions. Additionally, over the course of migration, depending on the experiences of the agent, his location-specific capital and evolving perception of circumstances in Japan and China, his assessment of where goals are more easily achievable is likely to change.

This chapter is structured as follows: in Section 6.1, factors that agents mentioned as influential in locational decisions are presented by sphere (career, family and lifestyle preferences) and further broken down to the factors agents cited as crucial. While it briefly touches upon the influence of these factors on various agents, in Section 6.2, agents grouped by family- and career-related phase, gender and occupation stand at the center and the impact of various factors on these groups is assessed. The following conclusion brings the two aspects together and discusses the impact of a number of factors on the decisions of various agents in order to explain who moves when and why. Chapter 7 integrates the findings of this chapter with stages of the decision-making process.

⁴⁸⁵ Physical well-being can be achieved through the instrumental goals of stimulation/activation and comfort, social well-being through status, behavioral confirmation and affection (Ormel *et al.* 1999).

⁴⁸⁶ Occupation also influences status, therefore contributing to the instrumental goal of status that produces social well-being in Lindenberg's conceptualization (Ormel *et al.* 1999: 67).

A note on methodology: differences between groups and the share among them who mentioned specific factors were examined. For an analysis of correlations, point-biserial correlations were conducted. The group factors counting the mentions of career, family, lifestyle preferences and systemic factors were transformed to interval-level z-variables⁴⁸⁷ and correlations were carried out for the dichotomous variables of whether agents had already made their decision, whether they adhered to their original intention, family- (early adulthood and family) as well as career-related life phase. In these correlations, at least one variable was dichotomous, which is why point-biserial correlations were chosen: the point-biserial correlation coefficient (r_{pb}) measures the strength of relationship between dichotomous variables, “when the dichotomy is a discrete, or true, dichotomy” (Field 2013: 881). Point-biserial correlations are Pearson correlations (Field 2013: 279).⁴⁸⁸

6.1 Influential/Decisive Factors – Why Agents Move or Settle

In this study, factors that participants mention can be largely divided into three groups: career considerations, family factors and lifestyle preferences, thereby reflecting strings of research identified in the literature.⁴⁸⁹ First, the content and impact of career considerations including differences in labor market demands, chances of upward mobility, salary levels, working conditions etc. are presented, grouped by influential and decisive factors. Subsequently, the impact of other considerations about agents’ family lives (for example, children’s well-being, Tabor 2014) is addressed. Finally, lifestyle preferences might also play a role, specifically integration into social networks.⁴⁹⁰ In addition to these spheres, systemic factors also play a role, such as immigration regulations or contracts affecting locational decisions. Agents simulate the outcome of movement and its

⁴⁸⁷ For career, mentions ranged 0–13, for family 0–6, for lifestyle preferences 0–14 and for systemic factors 0–2. In order to center the data around zero (mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1), each score is subtracted from the mean, and then divided by the standard deviation to produce z-scores (Field 2013: 31).

⁴⁸⁸ Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient “is a *standardized* measure of the strength of relationship between two variables” (italics in original, Field 2013: 881).

⁴⁸⁹ The literature on labor migration has identified the importance of economic factors (Kröhnert 2007; Massey *et al.* 1993: 432–434; Piore 1979; Sjaastad 1962; Todaro 1969), transnational networks (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994; Faist 1997: 188) and family (Adams 2004; Chiang and Hsu 2005; Cooke 2008; de Haas and Fokkema 2010; Harbison 1981; Lawson 1998; Michielin, Mulder and Zorlu 2008; Tabor 2014; Willis and Yeoh 2000) in migration, added by factors of lifestyle (Benson and O’Reilly 2009; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014).

⁴⁹⁰ Career considerations and networks are intertwined, in that human capital and whether it can be used in various locations depends on the “supportive networks (institutional, infrastructural, technical, education, social, financial etc.) [...] for and why which [...] skills have been created or channeled, and therefore have value in the relevant socio-economic context” Meyer (2001: 92).

impact on a number of primary goals,⁴⁹¹ taking political, cultural, economic and social frameworks into account.⁴⁹²

The way of grouping the various factors that play a role in locational decisions into three spheres as conducted in this study matches explanations given in the literature, yet it is based on the empirical data collected for this project. In interviews, agents explained that a variety of factors was important in their locational decisions. A word frequency analysis, counting how often words were mentioned in the interviews regardless of context, gives a first impression of themes important to the migrants. Results, (already) sorted by sphere, are reported in Table 6.1. The table is based on a word frequency analysis of the interviews conducted with participants. All words with a length of at least 3 letters were counted, and words relevant to locational decisions that were mentioned 50 times or more are included in this table. Due to the expected impact of the nuclear crisis after the triple catastrophe of March 11, 2011, the terms “Fukushima,” “radiation” and “earthquake” were also included.

⁴⁹¹ According to De Jong and Fawcett (1981: 55–57), agents seek the goals of wealth, status, affiliation, comfort, stimulation, autonomy and morality, but also social norms, personality traits and opportunity structure differentials as background factors.

⁴⁹² Beshers (1967: 133–139) adds that agents need to consider the following structural factors: characteristics of their jobs, but also housing markets, household composition and gender. As Dumont and Spielvogel (2007: 163) point out, “return is only an option if the political, economic and social situation in the home country is stable and attractive.” Participants of the study mentioned similar factors; this finding by Dumont and Spielvogel could therefore point towards an explanation for rising return rates to China.

Table 6.1: Word Frequencies in Interviews (n=112) Grouped by Sphere, MaxQDA

sphere	Frequencies	
career	education:	university/ies (1051), school(s) (914), degree (140), PhD (107), graduate(d) (218), graduation (89) study/studies (800), learn (171) student(s) (1458) <i>baito</i> (312), scholarship (152) education (162)
	occupation:	company/ies (1100), office (64), research (156) business (275) economy (287), economic (92) career (112), job(s) (705), working (381) salary(102), pay (99) skills (55)
family	family (341) parents (669), mother/mom (239), father/dad (218) married (135), wife (141), husband (98), boyfriend (62) child/ren (364) love (108), relationship/relations (186/90), date (107), care (162)	
lifestyle preferences	language (323), culture (310), food (107), environment (89), politics (40) friends (1131) home (262)	
others	Japan/Japanese (3643/2753), China/Chinese (2184/1712), close (279) foreign/er(s) (416), visa (427), policy (116), government (120), <i>ejūsha</i> (59), rules (107), discrimination (95), war (83) money (407), expensive (75), buy (53), chance/s (299), apartment (159) Fukushima (37), radiation (33), earthquake (156) change (165), future (158) decision/decide/choose (488), plan (123)	

compiled by the author.

The most often mentioned word is Japan/Japanese followed by China/Chinese, which already provides clues to the fact that agents compare their situations in Japan and China and where they can better achieve goals.⁴⁹³ As the vast majority of participants of this sample entered Japan as students, this explains the focus on education; the fact that the terms graduate/graduation/degree were mentioned many times underscores the findings of the previous chapter that the end of a set time frame, namely being awarded a university degree, is a decisive point in time at which to consider migration. In the family sphere, parents were most often mentioned (as opposed to children or spouse, which can be explained by the early life phase of many participants). In the sphere of lifestyle preferences, there is a

⁴⁹³ The fact that Japan/Japanese and China/Chinese were often mentioned is also a result of the content of the interview guide that asked participants to reflect on their lives in Japan and China; yet the high number of mentions (6396 and 3896, respectively, compared to, for example, the term university (1051 mentions) which was also a crucial term for the interviews) suggests that participants themselves added a comparative perspective.

focus on friendship networks and culture. In the line labeled “other,” next to mentions of Japan and China, problems and goals of daily life are included, as well as the extra category of issues surrounding the 3/11 triple disaster. While the table reports the mentions of specific words regardless of context and does not provide information on the impact of these factors, it illustrates which issues were important to the migrants in the sense that they talked about these themes in depth.

After several rounds of coding based on grounded theory methods using the qualitative data analysis program MaxQDA (see Chapter 3), influential and decisive factors were coded for statistical analysis with SPSS. Organizing the factors into the three spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences (as well as systemic factors) is the result of qualitative coding of the interviews as a whole (frequency analysis), and an analysis of the most often given answers to the specific questions of which factors were influential and decisive for locational decisions. While the frequency analysis is based purely on the number of mentions, the qualitative analysis of the interviews puts the emphases migrants placed on specific factors in context, resulting in nuanced codes for influential and decisive factors. Individual factors were grouped by sphere, which are again disentangled in the following subsections;⁴⁹⁴ yet, the subsequent two tables provide an overview: Table 6.2 shows which groups of factors were mentioned as influential in locational decisions (Multiple Response Question, MRQ), while Table 6.3 depicts which groups of factors were decisive in decisions about whether to return or settle (Single Response Question, SRQ).⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁴ Next to grouping individual factors by sphere (career, family, lifestyle preferences and systemic factors), they were also divided into factors related to Japan and China. Factor groups include: career Japan/China, divided again by positive and negative career factors for the two countries (factor groups: career, career Japan, career Japan positive, career Japan negative, career China, career China positive, career China negative), family divided by parents, spouse and children and the former two again by place (factor groups: family, family parents, family parents Japan, family parents China, family spouse, family spouse Japan, family spouse China, family children), lifestyle preferences divided by place but also identity and objectives (factor groups: lifestyle preferences, preferences Japan, preferences Japan positive, preferences Japan negative, preferences China, preferences China positive, preferences China negative, individual objectives, character, and identity), systemic factors and the country groups, factors related to Japan and China without connection to sphere (Japan positive, Japan negative, China positive, China negative).

⁴⁹⁵ Which factors specifically fall into the large categories of career, family, lifestyle preferences and systemic factors that agents deemed influential in locational decisions is addressed in Subsection 6.1. Agents generally compared career chances, working styles, upward mobility, educational systems, and lifestyle preferences in Japan and China. Among the factors agents deemed influential, agents named family (in general and specifically parents or spouse), career (career chances in Japan vs. China), and a combination of the two (explaining that family and career chances were concentrated in Japan or China or that agents were torn between the two), and lifestyle preferences (preferences of lifestyle in Japan vs. China, character, identity and goals).

Table 6.2: Influential Factor Groups in Locational Decisions by Stage in the Decision-making Process (n=111), MRQ

	made decision (n=53)		considering options (n=58)		total
	n	percentage	n	percentage	
career	50	94%	57	98%	96%
family	40	75%	40	66%	72%
lifestyle preferences	52	98%	58	100%	99%
systemic factors	10	19%	14	24%	22%

compiled by the author.

The most numerous group of factors agents mentioned when asked which factors were influential in locational decisions is the sphere of lifestyle preferences (99%),⁴⁹⁶ closely followed by career factors (96%). There is little difference in answers given by respondents by stage in the process, which suggests that there actually is either not much of a difference in what agents perceive as influential before and after making a decision about their settlement location, or that they fit the narrative to what they see as socially desirable.⁴⁹⁷ The answers given for decisive factors in locational decisions further strengthen this impression for the strong impact of career and family spheres, as can be deduced from Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Decisive Factors for Location by Point in the Migration Process (n=108), SRQ

	made decision (n=51)		considering options (n=57)		total
	n	percentage	n	percentage	percentage
career	22	43%	18	32%	37%
career and family	13	25%	13	23%	25%
family	14	27%	15	26%	27%
lifestyle preferences	2	4%	11	19%	12%

compiled by the author.

Table 6.3 depicts in so far surprising results in that the most often mentioned sphere for influential factors, namely lifestyle preferences, is the least often mentioned for decisive factors overall. In addition, there is a difference between those who have made the decision based on their lifestyle preferences and those who expect this sphere to be decisive: more of those considering return than those who have made this decision expect to base the locational decision on lifestyle preferences (19% vs. 4%). As the data are not based on longitudinal data and do not refer to the same cases and which factors the same agent expected to be vs. which ones actually were decisive, this difference might be either a result of changing values over time or really of a difference in expected and factual reasons

⁴⁹⁶ This means that 99% of participants mentioned at least one factor from lifestyle preferences.

⁴⁹⁷ Note that the statements of what is influential or decisive in locational decisions do not compare statements among the same cases.

for locational decisions. As has been pointed in Chapter 5, agents did not clearly differentiate between factors that were decisive for the decision itself and the timing for carrying it out,⁴⁹⁸ which may be another reason for the divergence in factual and expected reasons for return.

These tables provide a first impression of which groups of factors are important to migrants in locational decisions, namely career, family and lifestyle preferences (as well as systemic factors), compared between Japan and China. Which factors exactly agents cite is the focus of this section, while it also briefly touches upon differences in agents by gender, life phase and occupation. Each of the following subsections focuses on a sphere divided first by influential factors and then by decisive factors. The first subsections shed light on the quantifiable perspective of the mentioned influential factors, while the following subsections add the quality and weight of specific factors for a more comprehensive understanding. Factors identified by the literature and the agents themselves are tested for various groups. The sample is divided into whether agents have made the, in their perception, “final” locational decision, and whether they (intend to) stick to their original plan in terms of length of stay or deviate from it. There are only low (point-biserial) correlations for career ($r_{pb}=-.153$), family ($r_{pb}=-.057$), lifestyle preferences ($r_{pb}=-.097$), or systemic factors ($r_{pb}=.119$), when examining agents by whether they have already made their (in their perception) “final” international locational decision (Japan or China).⁴⁹⁹ Sticking to the plan, however, correlates positively with family ($r_{pb}=.277$), meaning that the more reasons agents give for their locational decisions in the family realm, the less likely they are to stick to their original intention of length of stay in Japan. Yet, only low correlations with career ($r_{pb}=.030$), lifestyle preferences ($r_{pb}=.031$) or systemic factors ($r_{pb}=.083$) could be identified.⁵⁰⁰ The following sections on career, family, lifestyle preferences and systemic factors depict influential and decisive factors for various groups of agents.

6.1.1 Career

In the introduction to this chapter, Table 6.2 showed that career was mentioned by all but four of the 111 participants (96% of the sample) when explaining which factors they considered in their locational decisions (only lifestyle preferences

⁴⁹⁸ The decisive underlying reason for return might be family factors but agents may cite a job offer as decisive for the timing and also the direction of the decision in retrospect in the interviews.

⁴⁹⁹ The dichotomous variable for whether agents had made their “final decision” was coded as 0 if they had made the decision and as 1 if they were still considering where to settle. In the calculation, z-scores for career, family, lifestyle preferences and systemic factors were used. For career, mentions ranged 0–13 (z: -1.65 to 3.67), for family 0–6 (z: -1.11 to 3.05), for lifestyle preferences 0–14 (z: -2.27 to 2.32) and for systemic factors 0–2 (z: -.48 to 3.42).

⁵⁰⁰ Adhering to the plan was coded as 0, extending or shortening the stay as 1.

were mentioned by more agents); career was most influential in the final decision: 40 interviewees (37%) claimed that they make locational decisions based on career considerations, 26 (25%) based on a combination of family and career factors (see Table 6.3 and Section 6.1.2). This subsection zooms in on which factors precisely agents cite as influential and looks at which ones are decisive. It connects career factors with agents' intentions about whether to return or settle and their intention of sticking to their original plan of length of stay.

Agents are hypothesized to opt for movement if they think they will profit from the move and if the benefits outweigh the costs. For the specific sphere of career, Kley (2009: 136) found for her sample in a study on domestic migration decisions in Germany that the chances that an agent would consider migration doubled if the agent thought his career would improve with migration. From the literature review of Chapter 2 one would expect highly skilled agents to name mainly economic factors such as earning differentials, development gaps, taxation policy, labor market structure, corporate labor markets, government policy including favorable legislation for business development/research in the career sphere, but also factors closely connected to agents' career strategies, such as perceived job chances, working contents, prestige and working environments, in addition to non-pecuniary factors such as networks and sociocultural affinity (Mahroum 2000, Solimano 2008: 5; Straubhaar 2000: 20–21; Thorn and Holm-Nielsen 2008). Yet, as Iredale and others have pointed out, factors that agents consider in the career realm are likely to differ for various occupations (Iredale 2003; 2001; Mahroum 2000; Solimano 2008), but also by career stages. Mahroum (2000) distinguishes between five groups of occupations and distinguishes factors influential for their locational decisions: managers and executives, engineers and technicians, academics and scientists, entrepreneurs and students, added in this study by a sixth group of workers operating in the middle management. Managers and executives “are mostly affected by corporate policies, especially regarding internationalization and expanding of activities overseas” (Mahroum 2000: 25), which means that they are sent by their companies and a brief stay abroad can turn into long-term settlement. Mahroum (2000: 26) claims that engineers and technicians are “‘pulled’ and ‘pushed’ primarily by economic factors, i.e. best offers.” He expresses “that there are two main dynamics for scientific attraction: (1) the attraction of a country in a particular discipline, (2) and the prestige of an institution,” and that entrepreneurs are pulled by favorable policies and credit facilities (Mahroum 2000: 27).⁵⁰¹

⁵⁰¹ Mahroum (2000: 28) also explains that entrepreneurs in the U.S. rule out moving back to Europe due to a perception of inflexible bureaucracy, an unfavorable entrepreneurial climate, lack of flexibility in HR management and a lack of venture capital, as well as family factors (relying on a study conducted by Acteam in 1999).

In this study, agents identified the following career goals (see also Section 5.1.2.1), some of which they try to achieve with movement: getting into and graduating from prestigious universities, receiving high salaries, working in a good team in relaxed working environments, having the option of flexible working hours, having the potential of upward mobility, working in high positions and for the best company, becoming an entrepreneur, being acknowledged and using all of one's skills. Problems that agents enumerated in their careers in Japan included: dislike of working styles, lack of upward mobility, bad career chances for women, impossibility of finding employment. In the following, influential factors are first enumerated and then analyzed with regard to their quality. Differences for occupation and career stage are addressed in Section 6.2.3.

6.1.1.1 Career: Influential Factors in the Decision-Making Process

Career considerations were mentioned by 108 participants (n=111) as influential in their locational decisions. Which factors agents mentioned is the focus of this subsection. The median of career reasons mentioned lies at 4 reasons per person;⁵⁰² in comparison, the median stands at 7 mentions for lifestyle preferences and only 1 for family reasons per respondent. Although agents weigh a number of different options in order to solve specific career problems or achieve career goals, in this chapter, return migration or settlement stand at the center. Only problems and goals from the career sphere influential in locational decisions are included at this point. It is hypothesized that highly skilled agents ponder migration (or settlement) depending on their perception of career circumstances in Japan or China; career factors can be considered especially important to highly skilled migrants in general and participants of the study in particular, because career improvement is the primary motivation for the initial migration decision. The influence of family and lifestyle factors is examined in the subsequent subsections. After presenting which career factors were most often mentioned, they are tested for differences in mentions for their impact on (the timing of) return decisions for various groups. Of those who mentioned career factors, 94% referred to career factors in Japan and 75% to China.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰² One agent named 13 reasons, while three mentioned 10. The mean stands at four reasons.

⁵⁰³ Of the mentions of Japan, 87% referred to positive and 50% to negative career factors. Of the ones who cited career reasons relation to China, 81% bring up positive, one third negative aspects.

Table 6.4: Career Factors Influential in Locational Decisions (n=111), MRQ

factors	number of agents	percentage of the sample
- finish studies in Japan	43	38% ⁵⁰⁴
- dislike of Japanese working styles - better career chances in China	27	24%
- gain more working experience to improve position on Chinese labor market	21	19%
- better career in China	20	18%
- gain more working experience to improve skills in general - bad chances for foreigners in Japan	17	15%
- higher level of technology in Japan ⁵⁰⁵	16	14%
- better image of post-graduate education in Japan ⁵⁰⁶	15	13%
- happy with current job in Japan - international working experience - perceived lack of upward mobility	13	12%
- higher salary in Japan ⁵⁰⁷	12	11%
- well integrated in Japanese business world	11	10%

compiled by the author.

In Table 6.4, factors that are mentioned by at least 10% of the sample are enumerated. It shows that agents compare different factors in the Japanese and Chinese context, among them working styles, career opportunities, (marketability and contents of their) human capital, upward mobility, development gaps, job satisfaction and location-specific capital. These factors reflect most of those identified in the literature, yet opportunity structures were only mentioned by 3% and corporate labor markets by 7% of the sample. Examining the entire sample, most participants mentioned positive factors about careers in Japan (79% mentioned positive factors, 45% negative factors), while 59% cited positive and 24% negative career factors about China.⁵⁰⁸ The impression that agents consider stays in Japan as in investment in their human capital is strengthened by these answers; the focus on increasing agents' human capital through studies, working experience and high levels of technology in Japan before returning to China where

⁵⁰⁴ All of the students (n=41) mentioned this factor.

⁵⁰⁵ Despite the fact that 14% of the sample named higher levels of technology as influential in their locational decisions, there was little difference between the groups divided by gender, stage in the decision-making process, life phase or occupation for the factor of technology.

⁵⁰⁶ This could reflect Mahroum's (2000: 27) factor of prestigious institutions that serve as "pull-factors."

⁵⁰⁷ Despite the literature's focus on the influence of pay gaps in developed and developing countries on migration, only 11% of the participants mentioned this factor, and the word frequency analysis only shows comparatively few (201) mentions.

⁵⁰⁸ Factors were organized such that categories were established for whether agents mentioned or did not mention positive factors etc. Therefore, negative and positive mentions do not add up to 100%.

agents perceive their career (chances) to be better suggests that the temporary outlook on life in Japan only slowly fades for just few agents. Yet, agents express a nuanced view of positive and negative career aspects in Japan and China.

The following paragraphs zoom in on a few selected factors mentioned by a larger number of the sample as influential in their decision-making processes: quality and quantity of job chances, applicability of skills, salary levels, job satisfaction, upward mobility as well as working styles, and looks at who mentions these factors as influential. Due to agents' general impression of the Japanese economy as troubled (58%) and a favorable impression of the Chinese economy (77%), one would expect perceptions about quantity of career opportunities to be in favor of China, while perceptions of the quality of job chances might still be higher in Japan due to its more advanced technological level. There should be differences in the number of mentions and impact by occupation but also career-related life phase; it can be hypothesized that agents starting out are attracted by larger number of job opportunities, while the wish to bring in one's growing skill set will increase during one's career. Table 6.5. shows perceptions about quality and quantity of job chances in Japan and China:⁵⁰⁹

Table 6.5: Perception of Quality and Quantity of Job Chances in Japan and China, SRQ

	quality		quantity	
	n	percentage	n	percentage
higher in Japan	19	17%	13	12%
no difference	72	66%	39	35%
higher in China	18	17%	58	52%
total	109	100%	111	100%

compiled by the author.

Perceptions of quality of job chances were evenly distributed; however, 40% more participants explained that there were more job chances in China than in Japan. Of the ones who mentioned that they perceived the quality of job chances in China to be better and those who perceived the quantity to be higher in China, there were more that had already made the decision, than those who were still in the phase of consideration.⁵¹⁰ There was no connection between perceptions of quality and quantity of job chances in China and Japan for agents' likelihood of sticking to the plan and little difference if examined by gender. Examining agents' perceptions by occupation or career stage, a higher share of agents from the middle

⁵⁰⁹ These variables result from participants' answer to the direct question of where they perceive to have better job chances, Japan or China. In a follow-up question, participants were asked to differentiate between quantity of chances and quality of chances.

⁵¹⁰ For the factor of quality, this is true for more of those who had made the decision (25%, 16% more than those in the consideration phase) and for quantity, the percentage for those who had made the decision stands at 64%, 21% more than among those considering migration.

management category saw more job chances in China than those who felt Japan and China were both supplying ample opportunities. Of all participants that perceived more career chances in China, the biggest difference was between the middle management and students (85% of the middle management, 46% more than for students, see also Section 6.2.3). In terms of quality, of those who saw a higher quality of job chances in China, more agents were established in working life (23%) than only just starting out (14% less).⁵¹¹ Although one would expect there to be differences by occupation,⁵¹² difference between groups were little, probably as a result of the diversity of this category. Therefore, despite the expectation that younger agents would make locational decisions based on a higher number of job chances or the quality in order to invest in their human capital, it is agents who already made the decision and participants already advanced in their careers that show higher percentages of positive perceptions of quantity and quality of career chances in China. One possible explanation is that with rising working experience, factors such as upward mobility gain in importance; 59% (n=33) of those who expressed that they had more career chances in China (n=58) also explained that they thought they had better chances of upward mobility there.⁵¹³ 67% (n=12) of those who expressed to have qualitatively better job chances in China (n=18) saw better upward mobility and 44% (n=5) higher applicability of skills in China.⁵¹⁴

The individual factor of applicability of skills, although often mentioned as a problem in the interviews, shows little differences for gender, stage in the decision-making process or on the adherence to the original time plan. There are some differences for family-related as well as career-related life phase and occupation, though. Among those who explain they can better put their skills to use in China (n=11), a higher share is already established in working life (17% vs. 4% of those just starting out). As would be expected, of those who want to gain more working experience to improve their skills in general (n=17), more were starting out in their careers (25% vs. 5% in the established phase).⁵¹⁵

Salary levels (mentioned by only 12 agents, 11% of the sample) seemed to have little impact in the decision of whether to return, settle or locational

⁵¹¹ The picture looks similar for the factor of “better career in China”: of those who mentioned this factor, more were in positions in the middle management (45%) than students (10%).

⁵¹² One hypothesis could be that for agents working in technology fields, in which Japan is more advanced, or in research that cannot be conducted in China (as Luo (2003: 302) implies, a lack of academic freedom deters some Chinese from returning), perception of quality of job chances in Japan or China might be important in locational decisions; however, there was little difference in the sample.

⁵¹³ Another factor that could be hypothesized to matter in advanced careers is applicability of skills. However, only 12% of those who saw more career chances in China also mentioned that they could better put their skills to use in China.

⁵¹⁴ An even larger share of agents established in working life echo this impression if the sample is divided by career-related life phase.

⁵¹⁵ The picture looks similar for the early family-related life phase (34% vs. an average of 7% for family and establishing phases).

indecisiveness, yet they were important in the decision of whether agents stuck to their original plan: more agents that deviated from their original plan mentioned the factor of salary levels as an influential factor in their locational decisions compared to those who did not comment on this (difference of 41%). The picture looks similar for the factors related to job satisfaction: no differences between agents who have made or are still considering their locational decisions can be inferred, yet more of those who cited being happy with their job in Japan (n=13) deviated from their plan than adhered to it (13% difference, 17% mentioned it, 4% did not). Of those who referred to job satisfaction in Japan, more were established in their working lives (20%) than just starting out (4%).

The factor of upward mobility had little impact on the questions of whether and when to return, yet more men (18%) than women (4%) criticized a perceived lack of upward mobility in Japan as influential in their locational decisions (n=13), and more were established in working life (18% vs. 5% among young workers/students). Among those who mentioned a dislike of Japanese working styles as influential (n=27), there was a higher share among men (34%, $\Delta=+22\%$ compared to women,⁵¹⁶ see Section 6.2.2 for further information on gender differences).⁵¹⁷ More of those who stated to prefer Japanese working styles (n=9) in a separate question had already made their locational decision (15% vs. 2% in the consideration phase), while of those who thought both Japanese and Chinese working styles suited them (n=62), more were in the phase of consideration (67%, $\Delta=+24\%$ compared to those who already made the decision).⁵¹⁸ More (48%, n=25) of those who stick to their original plan (compared to 23% of those deviating

⁵¹⁶ Δ designates the difference between the shares, given in percentage points. In this case, this means that 34% of men expressed to dislike Japanese working styles, while only 12% of women mentioned this factor. The difference is 22%p.

⁵¹⁷ These results were obtained from the factors mentioned as influential in their locational decisions. When asked about preferences of working styles apart from decision-making processes, more men than women reported a preference for working styles in China (men: 41% vs. 22% of women in the category of those preferring Chinese working styles).

⁵¹⁸ When asked about their preference of working styles separately from influential factors in locational decisions, 32 participants explained that they disliked Japanese working styles. 72 MaxQDA codes for criticism of Japanese working styles were assigned to the interview transcriptions, in addition to 60 codes that denoted problems foreigners faced on the Japanese labor market. However, dissatisfaction with working in Japan must not mean that agents prefer working in China; 36 preferred Chinese working styles if asked directly about a preference (comparatively few when examining complaints about Japanese working styles). Among returnees, about 50% explained that they preferred Chinese working styles (18 men, 3 women). In the category of the ones considering return, 23% preferred Chinese working styles. Examining the entire sample who answered the question about preference of working style (n=107), only about 8% preferred Japanese working styles as opposed to 33% that strongly preferred Chinese working styles; and overwhelming number of 58% had no preference. When comparing preferences of Chinese working styles with the decisive reasons these 36 agents gave for (considering) returning to China, 15 explain that they perceive their careers to be better in China, while another 10 deem a combination of family and career factors decisive. For the other 10 (one did not answer), family reasons and lifestyle preferences decide return, yet a preference of working styles in China probably contributes to satisfaction with the decision after return.

from it) express that they see higher chances of upward mobility in China, while a higher share of those who deviate from their original time frame (n=34) think that chances of upward mobility are the same in Japan and China (72% vs. 40% of this adhering to the original plan of migration).

An analysis of the factors participants mentioned as influential therefore strengthens the image of a mainly temporary outlook for the stay in Japan that centers on the improvement of career chances of the participants. Japan is chosen for its high level of development in education and technology, yet agents plan on returning to China. They compare specific factors between the two countries, among them working styles, career chances and applicability of skills. There were differences in the groups of those who had already made their locational decisions and those still considering their locational options for the factors of perception of quantity of job chances and a preference of Japanese or Chinese working styles. It is the older agents who are already established in their working lives who perceive higher quality and quantity of career chances in China and feel that they can better use their skills there. Younger agents, students and those starting out in their careers, seek to invest in their skills in Japan in order to improve their career chances in China. Salary levels, which in addition to general development gaps are the starting point of many economic theories of migration, proved to be mentioned more by agents that deviated from their original plan than those who stuck to it, as was the case for those who were satisfied with their jobs in Japan. This combination of factors suggests that a concentration on economic factors such as salary levels alone is not enough to explain international (return) migration of highly skilled, but that more general career considerations of the individual play a role.⁵¹⁹ Differences by life phase, gender and occupation are further analyzed in Section 6.2.

6.1.1.2 Career: Decisive Factors in the Decision-Making Process

Agents were asked to give the most important reason(s) for their locational decision and its timing. Career reasons were the most often cited among the factors that agents considered crucial for their locational decisions (see Table 6.3, n=108,

⁵¹⁹ The generalizability of this argumentation is limited, though: as only the number of mentions were measured and this factor was not specifically checked for its level of impact on locational decisions in a separate question, it cannot be argued that salary levels are not important, only that they are added to by other factors from the career, but also private sphere. While this limits the understanding of how factors interconnect and differ in their level of relevance on participants' decisions, the focus of this study lies on the decision-making process and the contextualization of locational decisions, for which the exact ranking of influence of individual factors is not crucial. The explorative approach instead analyzes which factors agents consider in their locational decisions, providing evidence of which factors participants are aware in these decisions. Future studies should, however, further investigate this issue to contribute to the understanding of locational decision-making.

SRQ): 37% of participants moved or settled for pure career reasons, 24% decided based on a combination of family and career factors. Among the participants that decided based on career reasons, 20% explained that career was generally decisive in their decisions, 15% expressed they saw better career chances in Japan and 50% better career chances in China. Another 15% stated that they needed to stay in Japan for a while before being able to build a successful career in China. Of those that had trouble deciding whether career or family was decisive, about 70% expressed that their home, family and career was in China, 15% that it was in Japan and 15% explained that they were torn between family wishes and the own wish to pursue their careers in a different location. There were more men (49%) than women (22%) who cited career reasons.

When it comes to the timing of migration, 24% (of $n=111$) expressed that career-related events were decisive for the timing of their locational decisions.⁵²⁰ Another 9% had set a time frame for working experience in Japan and 22% expressed that the end of their studies would be the decisive point in time at which to consider return.⁵²¹ For the timing, among those who expressed that the decisive factor was a career-related event ($n=27$), there were more managers and executives (53%) than students ($\Delta=-43\%p$) and also more employees (35%) than students ($\Delta=-25\%p$). The same picture is reflected if analyzed for career-related life phase: among those explaining the timing of return or settlement with a career-related event, more were established in their working lives (36%) than just starting out in their careers (13%).⁵²²

A look at the decisive factors for locational decisions underscores the expected centrality of career reasons of highly skilled migrants; yet the fact that many also included family reasons in their decisions reveals that a simplistic explanation of quantity of job opportunities or salary levels alone cannot sufficiently explain international return migration. Other factors identified in the literature such as achieving a savings objective before returning home could not be confirmed for the sample of this study.⁵²³

⁵²⁰ Of 27 participants, 70% cited job offers, 4% friends' career success, 19% retirement and 7% unemployment.

⁵²¹ Among those who expressed that the end of studies would be the decisive point for return, more (30%) had already made their locational decision than those still in the consideration phase (14%).

⁵²² The same holds true, however, for family-related events. In contrast, those just starting out in their careers are represented more (42% vs. 23%) in the group of those who express that the end of a set time frame is crucial for the timing of return.

⁵²³ It is unclear whether this is not part of the plan for participants of the study due to salary and price developments in Japan and China; early Chinese migrants to Japan were able to benefit from the comparatively high salaries in Japan and low prices in China (e.g., for housing) and sent remittances or saved money to reinvest in China. Migrants today are less able to benefit from the difference in salary levels, as because prices in China are on the rise (ECA International 2012), narrowing the gap.

6.1.2 *Family*

Family factors were mentioned by 71% of the sample when explaining which factors were influential in their locational decisions.⁵²⁴ From the MaxQDA word frequency analysis of the qualitative interviews it can be hypothesized that parents, spouse and children are of importance in locational decisions; how which of these agents impact decisions for which groups of migrants is analyzed in this subsection. Family reasons are among the most often cited decisive factors (next to career factors) for the settlement location (n=29, plus the combined factor of career and family given by 26 agents), however, for the timing, only 10 participants gave reasons from the family sphere.⁵²⁵

A literature review suggests that next to pecuniary factors, family factors also play a role in migration.⁵²⁶ In Kley's (2009: 136) study on domestic migration decisions in Germany, the following factors from the family sphere were of importance: if an agent lived with a partner that wanted to move, chances that the agent would consider migration quadrupled,⁵²⁷ and doubled if the agent thought his career or family life (or his perception of chances of finding a partner) would improve with migration. Meso-level theories of migration aiming at explaining the continuation of migration streams look at transnational networks; for return, the presence of a spouse or children in another country has been found as a factor explaining movement (Constant and Massey 2002b; Dumont and Spielvogel 2007: 181). Scholars' opinions diverge on the question of who makes the migration decision: while the authors in De Jong and Gardner's (1981) constitutive volume on migration decision making largely conceptualize an individual decision-maker influenced by family factors, Stark (1984: 253) argues that at least in urban-to-rural migration, the family is, in fact, the decision-making unit (see also Harbison 1981). In this study, the individual is seen as the decision-making unit, yet agents

⁵²⁴ There is little difference between those still considering their locational options and those who have made their decision: 40 participants cited family reasons.

⁵²⁵ One reason for this emphasis on the end of a set time frame and career factors in the timing of locational decisions may be the original reason for movement: this was in almost all cases an investment in agents' human capital. After a certain time period and with life phase transition, agents again place more emphasis on fulfilling the goals of being a good parent, spouse and son/daughter. Another possible explanation lies in the concept of parallel careers (Birg and Flöthmann 1990; Huinink and Wagner 1989; Wagner 1989; Willekens 1991; 1987): career- and family-related events or processes may be connected and in explaining the timing of decisions, participants might emphasize career- over family-related events in explanations of mobility (Section 6.2.1.3).

⁵²⁶ Originally, migration research focused on single male migrants (or leaving out the variable of migrants' sex), while women, if included at all, were largely reduced to trailing spouses (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Cerutti and Massey 2001: 188; Cooke 2008: 256; Guo and Iredale 2003: 81; Pessar 1998: 53–54; Purkayastha 2005: 182).

⁵²⁷ The relation is only this strong in cases of cohabitation; in separate households there was a positive correlation between own considerations of moving and a partner's wish to relocate, yet, the expectation that career and family life would improve with migration was a stronger predictor (Kley 2009: 136).

consider their responsibilities towards household and family participants, the influence of migration on them and, in some cases, make joint decisions.

Family can serve as a constraining or facilitating factor; the presence of parents in China who offer to help with child care may serve as a facilitating factor for movement, while a spouse's wish to invest further into his human capital in Japan may deter return movement. Family factors can also serve as triggers to locational decision-making processes. Life phase transitions are accompanied by changing responsibilities and priorities; if household size expands with cohabitation or childbirth or decreases after divorce, emotional, financial and timely responsibilities change as well (see Section 6.2.1 for a detailed account of life phases).⁵²⁸ In addition to household size and life phase, family composition, gender and the position of the agent in the household may influence decision-making processes (de Haas and Fokkema 2010: 543; Harbison 1981: 231–233; Willis and Yeoh 2000: 254). It is necessary to look at the various agents (parents, spouse and children) influencing mobility decisions, because a monolithic household view overlooks power hierarchies that exist between genders and generations within the same household (Faist 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Kofman and Raghuram 2005; Lawson 1998; Pessar 1998; Radcliffe 1991). The norm of filial piety, as shown in the previous chapter, and the question of how to fulfill parents' wishes and care for parents as they age is of high importance for some agents in the sample. For spousal factors, scholars questioning the monolithic household view have found that it is more often men that initiate family migration (Cooke 2008: 255; Gemicci 2011: 29; see also Purkayastha 2005: 182; Willis and Yeoh 2000: 258). Several authors have also analyzed the impact of children on mobility, as parents consider the well-being of children in migration decisions (Adams 2004: 475; Chiang and Hsu 2005; Michielin, Mulder and Zorlu 2008; Tabor 2014: 130). In order to fulfill the needs of different family members, families may move or settle as a whole or adopt a (temporary spatial) separation (see Iredale, Guo and Rozario 2003; Yang 2013).

Although original migration decisions (to Japan) happen most often in order to increase agents' human capital, with life phase transitions, family factors can be expected to gain in importance. The first separation from family and friends in China is a compromise to achieve a greater long-term goal; however, at the end of a set time frame or after reaching a certain point in their careers, agents may want to refocus their attention on aspects of their private lives and be less willing to

⁵²⁸ Changes in household composition increase the likelihood to consider migration (De Jong and Fawcett 1981: 56; Kley 2011: 473). As Beshers (1967: 135) put it: "Thus we would expect fertility patterns to influence migration." Refer also to Wolpert (1965) and Mincer (1978: 759), who mention the influence of life cycle events on migration. Case studies have confirmed the influence of these events on return migration (Bailey and Ellis 1993).

compromise in this realm.⁵²⁹ Goals from the family sphere that agents enumerated in the interviews include being a good spouse, parent and daughter or son; instrumental goals to fulfill one's responsibility are taking financial and emotional care of one's family, acting according to their wishes, spending time with and providing a safe environment for one's family as well as investing in good education for children. The following sections zoom in on factors agents explain to be influential in locational decisions, followed by the decisive ones.

6.1.2.1 Family: Influential Factors in the Decision-Making Process

Family factors were mentioned by 80 out of 111 participants as influential in locational decisions, the median stands at only one family factor per person.⁵³⁰ Examining the type of factors, of these 80 agents two thirds referred to parents, half to their spouses and one third to children.⁵³¹ The following Table 6.6 breaks down the various family factors by relation to the agent. Factors mentioned by at least 5% of the sample are included in this table, plus lower percentages that add to the understanding of other factors, or that are related to the specific factor of 3/11. In addition, combined factors are also included, which report the number of agents who mentioned any factor related to parents, spouse or children.

⁵²⁹ On the other hand, with age and life phase transitions, responsibilities may intensify simply due to parents' advanced age; the older the agent, the more likely it becomes that his parents may need care.

⁵³⁰ The median is low because 32 participants did not mention any family factors, 26 agents only one factor. The other roughly 50% of the sample mentioned family factors more often: 27 agents named 2 factors, 15 agents 3 and the remaining 12 agents named 4 to 6 factors.

⁵³¹ Of those who referred to parents, 81% mentioned factors related to their parents' location in China.

Table 6.6: Family Factors Influential in Locational Decisions, MRQ

relation	factors	number of agents	percentage of the sample
family in general	- be close to family (parents and extended)	15	13%
	- be close to nuclear family	7	6%
parents	- return to ageing parents in the future	23	21%
	- take care of ageing parents	4	4%
	- "I am a single child"	11	10%
	- parental pressure to return	10	9%
	- COMBINED FACTOR PARENTS	53	47%
spouse	- spouse wants to return	17	15%
	- spouse wants to stay	10	9%
	- will follow husband	6	5%
	- both partners employed in Japan	6	5%
	- return to get married in the future	6	5%
	- COMBINED FACTOR SPOUSE	40	36%
children	- children's education (present) ⁵³²	12	11%
	- children's education in the future	9	8%
	- radiation bad for children	5	4%
	- COMBINED FACTOR CHILD	27	24%

compiled by the author.

Evidently, far fewer agents named factors from the family realm than from the spheres of career and lifestyle preferences; however, this only refers to the number of mentions. The table does not explain the effect of these factors; they may have a strong impact on locational decisions, yet have not as many facets as career factors. This is supported by the MaxQDA frequency analysis, which shows that parents, children and spouse are often mentioned.⁵³³ Also, a lower number of mentions of specific family factors can be attributed to family status: while most members of the sample are likely to refer to their parents as influential (indeed, 47% do, making parents the most often mentioned family members influential in locational decisions), 44% of the sample are single, and 68% are childless and therefore less likely to refer to spousal and children's factors. This is in contrast to career and private factors, which affect all participants.

⁵³² As Khoo and Mak (2002: 2) put it: "Career satisfaction and having school-age children constitute a 'parsimonious set of predictors of Hong Kong immigrants' intention for permanent stay'" (cited in Iredale, Guo and Rozario 2003: 13).

⁵³³ Frequency analysis showed that parents were mentioned the most (669, mother/mom: 239, father/dad: 211), followed by children (364) and family (341) in general and marital relationships (relationship: 186, married: 135, date: 107, wife: 141, husband/boyfriend: 160). Other key terms that were grouped in the family sphere are care (162) and love (108). Note that frequency analysis counts the terms regardless of context and only gives an impression of important topics to the participant; the context, whether negative or positive and its impact on locational decisions, is unknown.

There were few differences between groups of participants for the single factors described above, but an analysis of combined factors for spousal, parental and children's factors provided interesting results. There was little difference between those who did or did not mention family factors for the stage in the decision-making process (whether the agent has decided on his "final" location or is still pondering movement/settlement). More of those who deviate from their original plan of length of stay mention factors related to their spouse ($n=22$, 47% vs. 23% who stick to the plan) and children ($n=16$, 34% vs. 12% intending to or having acted according to their original plan).⁵³⁴ More of those who refer to their spouse in Japan as a reason for locational decisions ($n=11$) deviate from their original plan (23%) than those who stick to it (8%). The same holds true, little surprisingly, for agents in the family phase:⁵³⁵ more (91%) in this phase mention family factors ($n=80$) than those in the phases of early adulthood (57%) and establishing phase (62%): broken down by relationship, more agents in the establishing (41%) and family (53%) phases mention spousal factors ($n=40$) than those in the phase of early adulthood (9%), and more in the family phase mention children ($n=27$) as a factor (49% vs. 3% in the phase of early adulthood). This is mirrored by agents established in their working lives, with a higher share of factors related to their children compared to agents only just starting out in their working lives. As would be expected, this is reversed for the factor of parents in China ($n=53$): more students (26%) than established workers (12%) mention this.

Analyses revealed a positive correlation ($r_{pb}=.277$, $n=99$) between adherence to the original plan of migration (adhering to it: 0, deviating from it: 1) and the amount of family factors mentioned (z-scores).⁵³⁶ That means, the more reasons people gave for their locational decisions in the family realm, the more likely they were to deviate from their original intention of length of stay in Japan. This is an interesting finding because especially in the literature on highly skilled migration, family factors are downplayed; yet for the question of whether participants stick to their original plan, family plays a role. One interpretation to explain this could be that with rising household size, agents need to discuss their decisions and consider the impact of relocation on more family members; compromise may include settlement as well as delayed or premature return (see also Section 5.2.2).

It is not surprising that those who are more advanced in the family-related life course mention more family factors than those in the phase of early adulthood;

⁵³⁴ The base of this analysis is all combined factors related to children. If single factors are checked, there are differences for the factor of children's education: more of those who deviate from their plan (10%) mention this than those who stick to the plan (1%), while more of those who have made their locational decision mention this (8%) than those who are still unsure about where to settle (3%).

⁵³⁵ Family phase refers to agents with the desire to start a family in the immediate future or that already have children of school age. The establishing phase refers to agents over 35 without children and the phase of early adulthood to single agents and those in non-committal relationships without the desire to form a family below the age of 35.

⁵³⁶ Z-scores for family are based on mentions of family (0–6); z-scores range from -1.11 to 3.05.

as only the quantity and not the quality or impact of mentions is measured, those with bigger households will refer to more participants in this household (married migrants with children vs. single migrants). With increasing age it is more likely that parents need care, therefore those in later career- and family-related life phases more often cite parental factors as influential in their locational decisions. The connection between agents sticking to the plan and family-related life phase is further addressed in the following section on decisive factors. There is a discrepancy between relatively few mentions of family factors in descriptions of what is influential in locational decisions and decisive factors in this sphere, which is in part explained by differences in quantity of mentions due to the limited variety of factors in the family sphere (vs. in the spheres of career and lifestyle preferences) and the weight of these factors.

6.1.2.2 Family: Decisive Factors in the Decision-Making Process

In the answers to the question of what was the decisive factor in locational decisions (n=108), 27% gave family reasons, 24% a combination of family and career factors (see Table 6.3, SRQ). Of the 29 agents that cited family factors as decisive for locational decisions, 41% referred to family considerations in general, 28% to concerns for parents, 31% to spousal factors. Compared to a low number of mentions among the influential factors (71% of agents mentioned family factors vs. 96% and 98% for the factor groups of career and lifestyle preferences, respectively), a relatively large number of agents explained that family factors were decisive for their locational decisions (more than one in four agents); this implies that the impact of these factors is far greater than the quantity of family reasons, so that a quantitative analysis solely based on the frequency of mentions does not explain the whole picture.⁵³⁷

As to the timing of migration (n=111), comparatively few agents (10%) named family-related events as decisive for the timing of their locational decisions, although the end of a set time frame may also include family-related considerations. In addition, preparing for a family-related life event may lead to changes in agents' working lives and they may stress those events as decisive for the timing of migration.⁵³⁸ Of the 11 agents that mentioned family factors decisive for the timing of return and settlement decisions, one agent left Japan because his parents had fallen sick, three because the spouse made the decision, three because

⁵³⁷ This has in part to do with the way the answers were coded; various issues of agents' spouses, for example, were pulled together to form the variable of "spouse wants to return," while career factors were more fragmented (lack of upward mobility, fewer chances for foreigners etc.). Therefore, single factors of the family sphere carry more weight than from the spheres of career or lifestyle preferences.

⁵³⁸ One example could be child birth: while it may be the decisive reason to return to receive help with child rearing, agents will cite a job offer as the decisive point in time at which to finalize plans.

children were entering school and two due to childbirth⁵³⁹ as well as another two due to children graduating school and simultaneous job offers in China.

As would be expected, the number of mentions of the various family factors differs with each life phase: younger agents (who are more likely to be single children) more often mention responsibilities towards their parents, while agents in the family phase more often refer to factors related to their spouse or children. Examining the decisive factors for locational decisions from the family phase (n=14), family reasons are more often given by women (64% vs. 17% by men). The connection between gender and family factors as well as between life phase and factors related to parents, spouse or children are not surprising and have been described in the literature. Yet, for the specific group of highly skilled migrants who are still often depicted as genderless (or with women as trailing spouses to skilled men), these findings deserve further analysis (see Section 6.2).

6.1.3 *Lifestyle Preferences*

Factors from the sphere of lifestyle preferences are the most often mentioned from all three spheres, yet they are remarkably less often expressed to be decisive for mobility decisions and their timing than career or family factors. 110 out of 111 agents gave reasons from the sphere of lifestyle preferences when explaining which factors were influential in their locational choices, yet only 12% of the sample explained that lifestyle preferences were decisive (n=108). Of these, 15% had already made their decision and had decided to stay in Japan,⁵⁴⁰ while the other 85% were still undecided at the time of the interview. Lifestyle preferences are not cited as decisive for the timing of migration. Frequency analyses, reported in Table 6.1, suggest that feelings of integration and belonging, identity and missing “home,” problems with daily life in Japan but also environmental factors play a role among the influential factors from this sphere.

The literature on the influence of lifestyle preferences on migration decisions is slim, as most authors focus on the basic needs of migrants to either make a living through work or providing for a family.⁵⁴¹ The emerging literature on lifestyle migration focuses mainly on affluent migrants’ search for a good life (Benson and O’Reilly 2009; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014). Wilbur Zelinsky (1974: 144) identified the following non-pecuniary motivations for relocations within the U.S.:

⁵³⁹ As pointed out before, life events are likely to affect mobility around the time of birth, yet married migrants with children are less likely to move (Hawley 2014: 40; Mincer 1978). This entails the necessity to distinguish between the event and the ensuing circumstances.

⁵⁴⁰ One gave the reason of wanting to live independently, the other of preferring his life in Japan.

⁵⁴¹ In analyses for return motivations, factors that do not meet the requirements of being work- or family-related are lumped together into “non-pecuniary factors.” Some scholars, however, do refer to specific factors such as networks and sociocultural affinity (Mahroum 2000, Solimano 2008: 5; Straubhaar 2000: 20–21; Thorn and Holm-Nielsen 2008).

“the increasingly free exercise of individual preferences as to values, pleasures, self-improvement social and physical habitat, and general life-style in an individualistic, affluent national community” [italics in original].⁵⁴² While this only refers to internal migration in a developed country, Dumont and Spielvogel (2007: 163) also point out that return migration in an international context is an option to migrants if the “political, economic and social situation in the home country is stable and attractive;” with China’s economic rise, lifestyle preferences could therefore also be expected to gain in importance in international locational decisions. Tabor (2014: ii) explained that lifestyle factors such as the environment, cultural similarity, society’s openness towards non-natives and “quality of life” are important in the destination selection. In their overview over “lifestyle” migration literature, De Jong and Fawcett (1981: 34) conclude that housing and consumption preferences influence short-distance moves while “life-style considerations (including retirement activities and climate) seem to be emerging as important preferences in longer-distance migration decision making.” In the choice of where to move, DaVanzo (1976: 15) has pointed out that the presence of friends and family may trump higher earnings opportunities for return or repeat movers. For Chinese return migrants, a number of studies have found that identity or patriotism may outweigh earning differentials;⁵⁴³ Zeithammer and Kellogg (2013: 645) explain that in “terms of attitudes, we also find that students with a higher degree of general national pride are more willing to sacrifice income to return home.” For settlement, Constant and Massey (2002b) show that emotional ties (“feeling German”) play a role. Dumont and Spielvogel (2007: 163) identify four main reasons for return, among them two from the sphere of lifestyle preferences as organized in this study: the “failure to integrate in the host country, [and a] preference for their home country.”

In their original migration decision to go to Japan which is most often made for career reasons, agents compromise in the spheres of family and lifestyle preferences. They start a new life in unfamiliar territory with often less prestige than they had in China, have to get used to new ways of social interaction etc. Once specific goals are reached, they may choose to refocus their attention on whether they are well-integrated, whether they are living according to their own preferences in terms of freedom, political or religious convictions and self-determination. Other, less clear-cut goals are living happily, evolving personally

⁵⁴² De Jong and Sell (1977: 139–140) find that safety, access to recreational facilities, commute to work and quality of schools are important in locational decision; while they look at population redistribution in the U.S., some aspects may be relevant for the choice between international locations.

⁵⁴³ Anthony Giddens (1991: 81) has connected the concepts of “lifestyle” and “self-identity” in the following way: “A lifestyle can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity.”

and giving back to the community. Even more than in the career sphere, agents directly compare lifestyle preferences between Japan and China.

6.1.3.1 Lifestyle Preferences: Influential Factors in the Decision-Making Process

All but one agent gave factors from the sphere of lifestyle preferences when explaining what was influential in locational decisions (n=111); the mean stands at 6.9 factors mentioned by agents from this sphere, the median at 7 reasons per person.⁵⁴⁴ Table 6.7 shows which factors were mentioned most often:

⁵⁴⁴ Another 20 and 13 participants gave 8 or 9 reasons, respectively; the maximum of mentions of factors from the sphere of lifestyle preferences stands at 14 given by 2 participants.

Table 6.7: Factors from Lifestyle Preferences Influential in Locational Decisions, MRQ

country/feature		factor	number	percentage
China	positive	- Chinese identity/feeling patriotic	44	39%
		- China is home	28	25%
		- feeling well integrated in China	18	16%
		- China is exciting	16	14%
		- preferring Chinese lifestyle	13	12%
		- better network in China	11	10%
	negative	- responsibility to improve China		
		- China is politically unstable	18	16%
		- China is insecure	32	29%
		- disliking Chinese politics	22	20%
		- lack of freedom in China ⁵⁴⁵	14	13%
Japan	positive	- good environment in Japan	33	29%
		- life in Japan is more stable	21	19%
		- life in Japan is more convenient		
		- like Japanese culture		
		- like Japanese people		
		- feeling comfortable in Japan	18	16%
		- freedom in Japan ⁵⁴⁶	17	15%
		- gotten used to Japan	16	14%
		- feeling well integrated in Japan	14	13%
		- whole life is in Japan	13	12%
	- prefer life in Japan	12	11%	
	negative	- feeling discriminated against in Japan	23	21%
		- people are too cold in Japan	22	20%
		- too much social pressure in Japan	21	19%
		- feeling lonely in Japan	15	13%
		- life in Japan too hard	13	12%
		- not well integrated in Japan	12	11%
		- bored with Japan		
Japan and China		- wish to improve Japan-China relations	15	13%
		- confused national identity	14	13%
character		- curiosity about foreign places	19	17%
		- liking new challenges	18	16%
		- experience life abroad	17	15%

compiled by the author.

⁵⁴⁵ Agents were asked about their perception of freedom in Japan and China outside of the context of their locational decisions. For their perception of levels of freedom in Japan, only 36 answered the question. While 7 felt free in China, 29 did not (22 pointed to political constraints).

⁵⁴⁶ 51 agents commented on their perception of freedom in Japan unrelated to their locational decisions: of these 34 felt free in Japan, while 16 pointed to social and one to political constraints.

Agents painted a rather balanced picture of their perception of how circumstances in Japan and China differ in aspects they consider important when contemplating where to settle (in all factor groups).⁵⁴⁷ Factors from the sphere of lifestyle preferences that were mentioned by at least about a fifth of the sample include patriotism/Chinese identity (most often mentioned factor overall with a share of 39%), feeling at home in China, but also a dislike of Chinese politics and feelings of insecurity in China. Pro and contra for living in Japan include the good environment (often mentioned were also stability and convenience of life in Japan) in contrast to feelings of discrimination and criticisms of social interaction (and pressure). This underscores the findings of Chapter 5 of difficult processes of weighing pros and cons of various locations, as agents had well-balanced opinions of Japan and China.

There were differences for these factors for any number of groups, as is presented in the following paragraphs. For the crucial question of this study whether agents had already made the decision of whether to return or settle in Japan on the one hand or whether they were still considering various options, there were differences for the factors of mentions of China, and regarding objectives and identity. More of those who were still considering where they wanted to settle (n=58) mentioned factors regarding their character or individual objectives (e.g., wish to experience international life) than those who had already decided where to settle (86% vs. 57% who had made their decision). The same holds true for the more detailed factors of individual objectives (n=52) and identity (n=57): more of those considering their locational options (of n=58, 64% mentioned individual objectives and 60% identity, respectively) than those who have already made their decisions (of n=53, 28% and 42% mentioned individual objectives and identity, respectively) explain that these factors influence their locational decisions. Yet, a higher share of those already settled (91%) speak of their positive and negative impressions of China than those who are still unsure about where to settle (76%). Examining the individual factors, there are differences for the dislike of Chinese politics (n=22), perceptions of convenience in Japan (n=21), being used to life in Japan (n=16) and curiosity about foreign places/the wish to experience life abroad (n=19/17). Many of those who are settled than those undecided express a dislike of Chinese politics and admiration for the convenience of life in Japan (30% of those who already made the decision mention both factors, compared to the undecided: 10% mention a dislike of politics, 9% an appreciation of convenience).⁵⁴⁸ A higher share of those unsure of whether and when to return

⁵⁴⁷ 98% referred to factors related to Japan, 84% to China. Of the agents that referred to Japan, 83% cited positive, 68% negative factors; for China, 79% of agents mentioned positive, 64% negative aspects.

⁵⁴⁸ Of the 16 participants that have made the decision and still express a dislike of Chinese politics, only two decided to settle in Japan; for the factor of convenience 4 who settled in Japan. This again

mention the factors of having gotten used to Japan (24% vs. 4%), curiosity of foreign places (24% vs. 9%) and the wish to experience life abroad (26% vs. 4%) than those who had made their settlement decision.

Among the groups of those who stick to their original plan and those who deviate from it, there are differences for the following factors: the responsibility to improve China (n=11, 17% of those who stick to the plan mention this factor vs. 4% who deviate), stability of life in Japan (n=21, 28% of those deviating from their original plan mention this factor vs. 12% adhering), feeling well integrated in Japan (n=14, 21% deviating vs. 4% adhering to the plan) and experiencing life in Japan as too hard (n=13, 17% deviating vs. 2% adhering to the plan).

One would assume that some factors gain or diminish in importance with family-related life phase; stability and safety, for example, could be more important in the family phase than in the phase of early adulthood. However, there were only larger differences between the groups for factors related to the character of agents: more of those in the phase of early adulthood (68%) refer to these general factors than those in the establishing (32%) or family phase (33%). Broken down by factors a higher share of those in the phase of early adulthood than in the family phase express being curious about foreign places (27% vs. 5%) and the wish to experience different things (23% vs. 2%). This picture is completed if the factors are broken down to the career-related life phase, which is presented in the following table:

Table 6.8: Differences between Factors from Lifestyle Preferences by Career-related Life Phase, MRQ

	student/ starting out in working life n=56		established in working life n=56	
	number of agents	percentage	number of agents	percentage
image of China	42	75%	50	89%
negative image of China	29	52%	40	71%
character of agents	33	59%	19	34%
well-integrated in China	14	25%	4	7%
China is exciting	3	5%	13	23%
life in Japan more stable	4	7%	17	30%
like Japanese people	5	9%	16	29%
people too cold in Japan	16	29%	6	11%
experience life abroad	14	25%	2	5%
experience different things/live to the fullest while still young	10	18%	1	2%

compiled by the author.

underlines the balanced image of the participants; while they appreciate factors about life in Japan, they weigh up different factors against each other and decide by setting priorities.

Broken down once more into career stage, the factors of exciting China (n=18), stability of life (n=21) and cold social relations in Japan (n=22)⁵⁴⁹ again differ from each other, as is the factor of being well-integrated in China (n=18). More managers and executives (47%) than students (5%) say that China is exciting to them, but also praise that Japan is more stable (47% vs. 7%). For the factor of having a better network in China, a higher share among engineers and technicians (50%, n=5) than students (2%, n=1) and participants of the middle management (5%, n=1) mention this as influential, however, on a low absolute level. This further supports the impression that younger agents, explicable by the only short time they have spent in Japan, are better integrated in China and see the time in Japan as a limited time frame to invest in human capital and to experience new things. Specifically in the earlier stages of living in a new country, these agents have trouble adjusting to their new (potentially diminished) status, social norms etc. Over time, agents perceive more positive and negative aspects of working and social life in Japan and China, leading to a more nuanced impression of benefits and detriments of settlement locations.

Comparing agents by gender, more women mention the general personal factors of goals and identity as influential in their decisions (86% vs. 59% men).⁵⁵⁰ Moreover, a higher share of women expressed the wish to experience different things while still young (20% vs. 2% men), but also having gotten used to Japan (22% vs. 8% men) and feeling comfortable in Japan (25% vs. 8% men). On the other hand, more men emphasize the factors of disliking Chinese politics (30% vs. 8% women), but also of the positive factors in Japan of good environment (38% vs. 20% women), stability (30% vs. 6% women) and convenience of life in Japan (28% vs. 8% women).

⁵⁴⁹ The case numbers for this are rather small: 60% (n=6) of engineers and technicians mention this factor, which is 50% more than in the middle management group (10%, n=2).

⁵⁵⁰ Specifically, for the factor of identity more women than men touch upon this in the interviews when asked about influential factors in their decision (71%, n=36 vs. 34%, n=21). This is surprising given Hibbins' (2005: 173) study on Chinese male migrants' gender identity, in which "being Chinese" played a key role. It referred to "a persistence of traditional (Confucian) values like responsibility for family as sole provider, guardian and protector; an emphasis on hard work and education; respect for older people and hierarchy, as well as other family participants," among others. As Hibbins acknowledges, Chineseness is constantly renegotiated and dependent on local political, social and historical circumstances, yet the self-identification as Chinese still serves as an anchor of self-identification against other groups. The fact that more women than men mentioned this factor as influential in locational decision does not contradict Hibbins' findings due to differences in the study's objectives, yet one would have expected men's identity as "Chinese" to influence locational preferences and therefore more mentions of this factor in men's answers.

Integration and Location-Specific Capital

The presence of friends as well as location-specific capital in the form of a regular clientele has been hypothesized to influence migration decisions, which is tested for the sample in the following paragraphs. In responding to general questions unrelated to the factors' impact on locational preferences, more of those who have not yet made their decision of where and when to settle express to lose touch with China (26% vs. 9% decided) and experience improving integration in Japan (43% vs. 2% decided) as well as a general risk-taking propensity (84% vs. 64% decided). Among those who feel at home in China there is a higher share sticking to their plan (87% vs. 66% deviating), while more of those who deviate from it feel at home in both places (32% vs. 8% adhering).⁵⁵¹ This is reflected by the factor of those feeling well integrated in Japan, as there are more who deviate from their original plan (62% vs. 37% adhering). There are differences by career-related life phase: a higher share of those established in working life feels at home in both places (32% vs. 11% starting out) and well integrated in Japan (70% vs. 36% starting), while more of those who are just starting out feel at home in China (88% vs. 62% established) and dislike life in Japan (21% vs. 4% established). With more time spent in Japan, feelings of integration are improving, which is partly shown in differences between those in the early and later career-related life phases and the way they use various network contacts:

⁵⁵¹ As it is specifically younger agents who express to stick to the plan, a look at students promises more nuanced insight: of the students sticking to the plan (n=30), 90% explain to feel at home in China; of the students that state to feel at home only in China (n=36), 75% stick to the plan.

Table 6.9: Nationality of Network Contacts Called Upon for Various Scenarios by Career-related Life Phase (n=68)⁵⁵²

type of problem	problem	network contact	student/starting out n=45	established in working life n=23
practical problems	help moving	Japanese	8%	6%
		Chinese	49%	38%
		mixed	18%	38%
	cultural problems in Japan	Japanese	37%	50%
		Chinese	24%	0%
		mixed	8%	38%
	borrow money	Japanese	3%	6%
		Chinese	51%	56%
		mixed	18%	19%
	looking for a job	Japanese	16%	19%
		Chinese	32%	19%
		mixed	34%	44%
emotional problems	discuss emotional distress	Japanese	11%	12%
		Chinese	41%	19%
		mixed	11%	31%
	bad day	Japanese	11%	25%
		Chinese	49%	25%
		mixed	24%	38%
leisure time	same hobbies	Japanese	19%	12%
		Chinese	38%	25%
		mixed	32%	62%
	leisure time	Japanese	5%	25%
		Chinese	42%	19%
		mixed	32%	44%

compiled by the author.⁵⁵³

Agents established in working life (and, as most agents in the sample entered Japan as students, who have therefore spent more time in Japan in various educational and business institutions) less often than those only just starting out in Japan rely on only Chinese network contacts when they need practical help. Most often they rely on mixed networks; the only exception to this rule is when agents established in their working lives need to borrow money. However, this reliance on binational networks among agents established in working life is not limited to practical help, but also applies for issues of emotional distress, which (40–50% of) students prefer to discuss with other Chinese. These differences between younger and older agents only become visible for issues related to leisure time, as established agents include

⁵⁵² 80% of participants who filled out this questionnaire were interviewed in Japan.

⁵⁵³ Other answering options not reported in this table were that agents did not encounter the problem, did not have anyone upon whom to call or agents of other nationalities, which is why percentages for each problem do not add up to 100%.

more Japanese agents for these activities than students.⁵⁵⁴ In terms of network composition by variety of skill level, students and workers do not differ strongly.⁵⁵⁵

Again, this chapter only examines the share of agents who mentioned specific factors. It therefore mirrors the agents' perception and awareness of specific factors, but it does not reflect the impact or quality of these factors for various agents, only differences between groups. What is striking, however, is the difference in many mentions of factors from this sphere of lifestyle preferences in contrast to few agents who see these preferences as crucial in their locational decisions.⁵⁵⁶ This could be interpreted to mean that these preferences serve as background factors tipping the scale towards staying or leaving, forming agents' general attitudes towards the behaviors of living in Japan or in China and their well-being.

6.1.3.2 Lifestyle Preferences: Decisive Factors in the Decision-Making Process

Despite the fact that almost all participants (99%) cited a great variety of factors from the sphere of lifestyle preferences (mean of 6.9 factors), these preferences were rarely decisive for locational decisions (in 12% of the cases, n=108). Of the 13 participants that do cite lifestyle preferences as decisive in locational decisions, 6 agents want to spend more time abroad before returning, 4 seek to live independently, 1 dislikes and 2 like life in Japan. This suggests that lifestyle preferences for living in Japan or China form background factors for career and family decisions for most of the agents in the sample, as, for example, for the factor

⁵⁵⁴ Examining levels of integration and the way women and men use their networks, more women (27%) than men (6%) express to share hobbies with Japanese in Japan, while more men than women would use their Japanese and Chinese networks for practical help (moving: 41% vs. 18%, legal problems: 35% vs. 9%) but also social events (61% vs. 36%).

⁵⁵⁵ Participants were asked whether they knew college graduates, entrepreneurs, illegally employed workers, low-skilled workers and university students in Japan and China.

⁵⁵⁶ For example, of the participants in the sample that returned, when asked about their attitude towards living in Japan only five expressed a dislike of living in Japan, which suggests that liking or disliking living in Japan does not necessarily directly impact movement, but instead only affects framing, potentially tipping the scale towards settling or moving if the dissatisfaction is not as severe as to make a move necessary to uphold a satisfactory quality of life. 14 sample participants dislike(d) living in Japan, however, of the six that remain in Japan, they find a way to come to terms with it and have been staying in Japan for an average of more than six years. For the ones that returned, the negative evaluation of their lives in Japan impacted their decision in so far as they returned as soon as they had achieved the goals of their stays; for none, it led to a premature abortion of the stay in Japan. Of the ones who disliked living in China (12), two returned anyway for family reasons. Five of the other ten will remain in Japan, while the others plan on returning to China in the future despite their dislike of living in their home country. More students or young workers disliked life in Japan than those established in working life (21% vs. 4%)

of “build additional skill before returning home.” Lifestyle preferences build the foundation of attitudes towards living in Japan or China but are often compromised to achieve goals in the family or career sphere. No factors from this sphere were stated to be decisive for the timing of return or settlement decisions.

The decisive factor of “China is home” or expressions of belonging are included among the combined factors that also include family and career factors that were mentioned by a total of 28 agents; however, agents stressed family and career more strongly than the sense of belonging, which (if only partly) travels with one’s family.⁵⁵⁷ Yet, the range of factors that agents mentioned shows that these feelings of belonging, but also critical opinions of Japan and China, do influence locational decisions and form attitudes towards movement; agents cite other aspects as decisive, though. Among younger agents and those who are still considering where and when to settle, many refer to their character, identity and individual objectives, including, for example, the wish to experience different cultures, or liking adventures.⁵⁵⁸ Those that have settled tend to focus more on the positive and negative aspects of Japan and China, which is exemplified by the fact that more of those who settled in China (especially men) express strong opposition to Chinese politics, specifically an unstable political situation, corruption, undemocratic structures and censorship, in contrast to those in Japan (as shown in Section 6.1.3.1). The further along agents are in their working lives, the more important networks become, which underlines the concept of the importance of location-specific capital. Agents did not cite lifestyle preferences as factors decisive for the timing. Those that deviate from their original intention more often cite integration in Japan, stability of life, but also difficulties in Japan.

6.1.4 Systemic Factors

Systemic factors were mentioned by about 22% (n=111) of participants as influential in their locational decisions. This extra category of systemic (or external) factors includes the factors of the triple disaster of March 11, 2011 (n=5), economic crises (n=5), pensions in Japan (n=3), scholarship contracts (n=4) that require return and the wish to stay until the agent can switch to a permanent residency visa (n=3).⁵⁵⁹ All four agents who explained that their scholarship requires return explain that the end of a set time frame is decisive for the timing of their locational decision. The *event* of 3/11, although only mentioned directly by five agents as influential in locational decisions, is given by three agents as the

⁵⁵⁷ 4 agents explained that their home, family and career were located in Japan.

⁵⁵⁸ When examining the mentions of individual objectives (n=51) by groups, it shows that more starting out in their careers (59% vs. 34% established) and considering migration (64% vs. 28% decided) mention this factor.

⁵⁵⁹ Only systemic factors that were mentioned by at least three agents are included in this enumeration.

decisive factor for return and by three also for the timing of this decision. While the number of agents who cited systemic factors is too small to show meaningful differences between groups, it is interesting to see who mentions the factors of radiation and 3/11: six agents mentioned that radiation was bad for (future) children and another six that it was bad for their own health (only one of each group also mentioned the event of 3/11; the *event* and its *consequence* of radiation therefore are treated differently). Only one explains that 3/11 is both the decisive reason for the locational decision and for its timing; one other cites family in general and another parental reasons as decisive for the decision, while in terms of timing one explains that the end of a set time frame for working experience and another a job offer were decisive. Overall, systemic factors, although mentioned by only a few agents, possess strong weight in the timing and direction of locational decisions of these agents.⁵⁶⁰

6.2 Groups

Literature on decision making in migration is divided by scholars who see the individual as the decision-making unit and those who focus on the household (Asis 2003; De Jong and Fawcett 1981; Harbison 1981; Stark 1984: 253). From this discord already it becomes clear that household size and composition, and therefore, life phase, must influence decision-making processes. While Dumont and Spielvogel (2007: 163) find in their study on highly skilled that return rates “do not generally vary much by gender, but [change] sharply over the life cycle of migrants, with higher rates for the young and for retirees,” the focus of this study lies not on return rates, but on decision-making processes and the factors agents consider in their locational decisions. Single migrants need to include fewer agents in their decision-making processes, while married agents with children may need to consult with parents, spouse and children. Mobility levels are higher for younger agents and decrease for agents in the family phase; they only increase again with retirement (Dumont and Spielvogel 2007: 163). Priorities and goals shift over the life course, and agents’ demands for the qualities that their location (neighborhood) needs to provide change with it.⁵⁶¹ With the acceptance of influence of life phase and household on migration decisions comes the necessity to look at gender and power differences within households (de Haas and Fokkema 2010: 543; Harbison 1981: 231–233; Willis and Yeoh 2000: 254). This section therefore looks first at differences in factors influential in migration decisions by life phase and then by gender. Additionally, occupation has been hypothesized to

⁵⁶⁰ This is also due to the way of summarizing factors, e.g. “end of a set time frame” that includes all scholarship or job contracts that run out.

⁵⁶¹ For agents with (the wish to have) children, the quality and access to schools is important while this may not even be a factor childless agents consider in their locational decisions.

influence the perception of benefits of relocation, as labor market demands and development levels differ for various occupations, and is therefore included as a third group.

6.2.1 *Life Course*

Conceptualizations of the life course, or life cycle, had their starting point at the institution of the family in the sense that marriage and child birth were seen as rites of passage toward “adult maturity and social responsibility” (Hunt 2005: 7). The family cycle model begins with the formation of a two-person household with marriage, followed by further household expansion with childbirth followed by a shrinking of the household once children move out and start their own families (Glick 1947). Although not originally connected to migration, the expansion and shrinking of households bring with them the necessity of different sizes of housing, as pointed out in Rossi’s (1955) study on the connection between life course and mobility behavior in Philadelphia. However, next to the family-related life course, agents engage in “parallel careers” (Willekens 1991; 1987), for example, in their working lives (Birg and Flöthmann 1990; Huinink and Wagner 1989; Wagner 1989). Mobility behavior may coincide with career- and family-related events (Willekens 1991; 1987), in particular the start and end of education and employment, cohabitation, marriage, childbirth and divorce (Huinink and Kley 2008; Kley 2011; Kley and Mulder 2010; Kulu and Milewski 2007; Mulder 1993; Wagner 1989). With life phase transitions, the likelihood to consider domestic migration but also return migration rises (Kley 2011; Bailey and Ellis 1993). The following two sections introduce the concepts of family-related and career-related life course in more detail and assess the impact of various factors on migration decisions for the various phases, followed by a third section on the impact of the same factors from the perspective of parallel careers.

6.2.1.1 Family-related Life Course

As briefly explained above, at the beginning of life course conceptualizations stood family cycle models (Glick 1947). With changes in life expectancy and diversity of family trajectories (changes that cut certain phases short and extend others) and a general decline of the centrality of family (Hunt 2005: 2, 8), both the concepts of the family *cycle* and of clear-cut stages in it have come under scrutiny. Stages have been redefined as phases, which lack “coherence, direction, and [are] open to considerable negotiation and discontinuity” (Hunt 2005: 2).

There is substantial discord about both the number and length of life stages and phases, and how they are understood differs in various cultures. The

designation of being in a specific life phase is socially constructed (Hunt 2005: 20).⁵⁶² “Family, education, the labor market, and the welfare state provide the social and material infrastructure for the modern life course.” Family influences the agent through “reciprocal trust and informal control,” education decides about skills, while labor markets influence career trajectories and the welfare state retirement pensions, for example (Heinz *et al.* 2005: 24). Individuals possess agency in that they decide when to invest in which activities to increase their well-being; these decisions are interdependent in that agents set priorities and seek to achieve a goal in one area of life to simultaneously enable goal achievement in another (Heinz *et al.* 2005: 25; Huinink and Feldhaus 2009).⁵⁶³ Despite this interdependence and the convincing concept of parallel careers (Willekens 1991; 1987),⁵⁶⁴ career- and family-related life phase are first treated separately in this and the following section to distinguish clearly between the influence of factors for agents in different career- and family-related phases. The third section then looks at overlapping factors in parallel careers.

Following Kley’s (2009) conceptualization, participants are grouped into three life phases: the phase of early adulthood, family and establishing phases.⁵⁶⁵ Kley (2009) differentiates agents between 18 and 29 years of age without children (phase of early adulthood), agents that have at least one child under the age of 10 (family phase) and agents from the age of 30 who either do not have children or whose children are older than 10 (establishing phase). In the phase of early adulthood, agents usually finish their education and start their careers. In the family phase, children’s well-being is often central in agents’ considerations of mobility. Agents in the establishing phase form a heterogeneous group, including both agents with children over the age of 10 that are freer to refocus their attention on their careers, and agents who either do not want children or chose to prioritize their careers and are now freer to focus on their families (Kley 2009: 158–159). For the sample of this study, the distinction between life phases follows the same logic; however, the conceptualization of life phases needs to be adjusted to meet the reality of international (vs. internal) migrants’ lives and cultural context, as argued in the following paragraph, at the price of reduced comparability.

In the different life phases, agents set varying priorities. In the phase of early adulthood among highly skilled migrants, agents usually graduate from university

⁵⁶² Heinz *et al.* (2009: 15) describe the life course approach as “a proper methodological basis for the analysis of social processes, [denoting] an interrelationship between individuals and society that evolves as a time-dependent, dynamic linkage between social structure, institutions, and individual action from birth to death.”

⁵⁶³ For example, agents seek employment in order to provide for their families.

⁵⁶⁴ Shin-Kap Han and Phyllis Moen (1999: 101) use the term of “coupled careers” to emphasize “the interlocking nature of trajectories and transitions, within and across life stages, between both men and women and work and family.”

⁵⁶⁵ For the context of this study the phases of infancy, childhood and youth are not applicable, as are life phases after retirement, as these agents were not included in the sample.

and start their careers, but also potentially form romantic relationships. In the family phase, the presence of children greatly influences priorities and mobility behavior. Certain priorities are therefore typical for specific age groups, depending on the demographic composition of the household.⁵⁶⁶ The distinction between life phases is based on events that have happened: agents had children (family phase), these children entered secondary schools (establishing phase). However, building on the results presented in the previous chapters, expected events impact decision-making processes and, in turn, mobility behavior. The intention to start a family influences perceptions of place-related factors; for example, agents may perceive circumstances in China more favorable for childrearing. While the demographic composition of the household influences mobility decisions through perceptions of behavioral control in the sense that mobility decisions are negotiated with the spouse, even for singles the intention to settle down plays a role in locational decisions. Therefore, the concept of the life course by measurable variables (as done by Kley (2009)) in addition to agents' self-interpretation of their situation (based on the analysis of the empirical data) is included in the conceptualization of the groups examined in the following.

Agents were classified as being in the phase of early adulthood (n=35), if they were single or in a non-committal relationship without the wish to have children (up to age 35). Family phase was defined by the desire to start a family and therefore also included singles that expressed to acutely focus their efforts on finding a partner and to start a family (e.g. through arranged marriage), married agents trying to have children or with children under the age of six or of school age (n=43).⁵⁶⁷ The establishing phase includes agents that are single and over the age of 35, in a serious relationship/married without the desire to have children or

⁵⁶⁶ One of the basic propositions of the life course approach in the context of migration is that agents form deepening ties over the life course, decreasing agents' migration propensity in later life while increasing it at the point of life phase transitions (Fischer and Malmberg 2001: 359): "In general, young people often have weaker ties than older people, married people have stronger ties than singles, and parents more than the childless."

⁵⁶⁷ There are various ways of classifying agents with children of various ages; up to the age of six, agents are hypothesized to feel more mobile, as children are not in elementary school yet. Children's education, however, is a factor to consider from the point of family planning. Agents planning on having children or those with children under the age of six already plan for the educational trajectory of these children. Mobility levels can therefore be expected to increase with the expectancy of childbirth already. Once children enter formal educational institutions, parents are more hesitant to make drastic changes disrupting children's educational trajectories. While trends in the sample seem to support this, the connection between children's age and stage in the decision-making process cannot be isolated due to limitations of data. While there are more agents in Japan with children under the age of 6 that are considering return migration, and more agents with children aged 6–17 that have made the decision, the connection between the migration decision for agents in China and child birth is unclear. The anticipation of the event already is connected to considerations of child safety and especially education, which is why agents with the wish to start a family and those with children of school age are all included in the family phase. For specific factors, however, they are viewed separately to correctly assess the impact of factors connected to children for various age groups.

married with children that have finished high school (n=34). The age of 35 was chosen as a break-off point between the phase of early adulthood and the establishing phase because some agents expressed to have delayed their wish to have children to a future point in time to focus on their careers in Japan before returning to invest in their family lives.⁵⁶⁸ This is in line with the global trend of deferring childbirth among highly educated women (OECD 2011): Chinese women are also increasingly postponing childbirth (CIIC 2007). Studies have found this phenomenon aggravated among migrant women (Jensen and Ahlburg 2004). Migration leads to a prolonged phase of “early” adulthood in the sense that family factors are not in focus; this justified the delaying of the cut-off point to 35. Only roughly around the age of 35 did agents consider themselves as settled in their family lives if they did not intend to have children, or they refocused their attention on family formation and then entered the family phase.⁵⁶⁹

The concept of the life course carries more meaning than just the concept of time and ageing in so far as that it is hypothesized that with advancing life phase, priorities change. In the phase of early adulthood agents focus on their careers and build a base for their family lives. In the family phase, family factors are hypothesized to rise in importance, while after children enter school, agents are able to refocus their attention on their careers or lifestyle preferences. Life phase transitions include rising or declining financial and social responsibilities (with marriage or divorce, for example), and larger households are likely to create the necessity to include more agents in locational decisions.

⁵⁶⁸ A number of studies have examined the impact of migration on the fertility of migrants (of any skill level), yet results varied due to inconsistent research designs; some studies observed that during migration, fertility rates declined and increased again upon return (Jensen and Ahlburg 2004). Explanations for fertility patterns of migrants include the socialization, adaptation, selection and disruption hypotheses (Jensen and Ahlburg 2004: 219–220; Kulu and Milewski 2007: 573): Migrants either follow fertility patterns learned in childhood (socialization), adapt to fertility patterns to the host society (adaptation), are pre-selected to show similar fertility patterns as the population in the destination country (selection) or that after migration, migrants are less likely to have children due to the disruptive effects of movement (disruption). Research on fertility and migration has largely centered on internal migration. Yet, some trends can be expected to be more pronounced in international migration. A combined perspective of these trends would suggest that highly skilled Chinese are likely to defer childbirth, in particular if they have a temporary outlook on their lives abroad and the primary goal of the temporary stay is career-related. In any case, the inclusion of migrants’ intentions about career and family trajectories for their intended time abroad is crucial to understanding migration patterns.

⁵⁶⁹ This is in seeming contrast to some agents’ explanations that turning 30 was a point in time at which they reconsidered their locational decisions as pointed out in the previous chapter. However, the age of 30 is a socially constructed point in time at which agents assess their levels of goal achievement (in both the family-related but also the occupational realm, as especially IT workers pointed out fearing becoming “too old” to be employable in China). 35 is chosen as a cut-off point for the family-related sphere only, as the career-ambitious agents examined in this sample often delayed starting a family due to migration and career objectives and therefore examined later in their thirties whether they wanted to pursue further family goals.

In the following, the factors agents of various family-related life phases mention as decisive and as influential in their locational decisions are traced. A number of differences can be expected for the influence of various factors for different family-related life phases. In the phase of early adulthood, one could expect parents to weigh in heavily in young agents' decision-making processes about relocation, as these migrants are probably single children and seek to please their parents. At the same time, parents' influence may also be small as they are still healthy and there is no urgent need for young migrants to return in order to take care of them. In the family phase, children's well-being can be expected to take center stage in locational decisions, while for agents in the establishing phase, concerns about parents' well-being are likely to increase in importance. For the early and later phases in the family-related life course, factors from the spheres of career and lifestyle preferences can be expected to be influential, while family factors overshadow other considerations for agents in the family phase. These assumptions are tested for the sample in the following.

Table 6.10: Decisive Factors for Movement by Family-related Life Phase (n=108), SRQ

	early adulthood (n=33)		establishing (n=32)		family (n=43)	
	n	percentage	n	percentage	n	percentage
career	10	30%	18	56%	12	28%
career and family	6	18%	3	9%	17	40%
family	8	24%	7	22%	14	33%
lifestyle	9	27%	4	12%	0	0%

compiled by the author.

A look at decisive factors in locational decisions by life phase confirms original expectations: priorities are evenly distributed in the phase of early adulthood, while agents in the establishing phase stress career, and, in the family phase, family factors. None of the agents in the family phase expressed that lifestyle preferences were decisive. A higher share of agents in the family phase (40%) than in the establishing phase ($\Delta=-31\%$) cited career and family factors, while more in the establishing (56%) than family phase ($\Delta=-28\%$) only named career factors. This seems to contradict the strong expectation that family factors were overwhelmingly central in the family phase, but it is a combination of career and family factors that is stronger for this group than for agents in other phases.

Table 6.11: Decisive Factors for Timing of Mobility Decisions by Family-related Life Phase (n=111), SRQ

	early adulthood (n=34)		establishing (n=34)		family (n=43)		total (n=111)
	n	percentage	n	percentage	n	percentage	
end of a set time frame	10	29%	11	32%	15	35%	36
family reasons	0	0%	5	15%	6	14%	11
career reasons	6	18%	8	24%	13	30%	27
external events	0	0%	2	6%	1	2%	3
no plans	18	53%	8	24%	8	19%	34

compiled by the author.

Table 6.11 shows that there is little difference between groups for the timing of locational decisions. Despite the broad distribution of decisive reasons for locational decisions in the phase of early adulthood, for the timing, the end of a set time frame and career-related reasons are decisive. This group also has the highest share of agents expressing to not have a set plan for return: more in the phase of early adulthood (53%) gave this answer than in the establishing (25%) or family phases (19%). External events are generally of little importance. For the timing, participants in establishing or family phases do not differ much.

The literature review gives reason to assume that agents in the family phase (but also in the establishing phase) are less mobile than those in the phases of early adulthood (e.g., Geist and McManus 2008). For the sample analyzed in this study, in terms of attitudes, this proves to be true, as shown in Table 6.12. Yet, those in the phase of early adulthood are also more likely to stick to their original plan, if they had one, while agents in the establishing or family phases are more likely to deviate from their original intention.

Table 6.12: Point in the Decision-Making Process (n=111) and Deviation from Original Plan (n=99) by Family-related Life Phase, SRQ

	early adulthood		establishing		family	
	n	percentage	n	percentage	n	percentage
made the decision	6	18%	18	53%	29	67%
considering return	28	82%	16	47%	14	33%
sticking to the plan	26	79%	13	43%	13	23%
deviating from the plan	7	21%	17	57%	23	64%

compiled by the author.

Earlier in life, agents are more mobile and therefore more likely to consider return, mirroring findings from previous studies on different destination countries (Geist and McManus 2008).⁵⁷⁰ Agents are probably still in the early stages of their career

⁵⁷⁰ This is the case for destination countries with varying immigration policies. For Chinese students, there is evidence that although return rates are increasing overall (Luo 2013/02/28; Wang 2013;

(see Section 6.2.1.2) and in their family lives, and aim at fulfilling their original plan first. Agents in the family and establishing phases are more “settled” in their family and working lives (in the sense that they are in stable employment and relationships), which is why a larger percentage in these groups has already made the decision of where to settle. At the same time, these agents are also more likely to deviate from their original intention; compared to agents in the phase of early adulthood, agents in the establishing phase were more likely to leave earlier (38%), while those in the family phase are more likely to stay longer (39%).⁵⁷¹

In the following paragraphs, factors that agents in the various life phases named as influential in their decisions are in focus. Analyses showed a positive (point-biserial) correlation ($r_{pb} = .482$, $n=78$) between the two family-related life phases of early adulthood (coded 0) and family phase (coded 1) and the amount of family factors mentioned (z-scores).⁵⁷² As would be expected, the more agents referred to family reasons to explain their locational decisions, the more likely they were in the family phase. In fact, 91% of those in the family phase (39 out of 43) mentioned family factors as influential in their locational decisions, more than those in the phases of early adulthood (57%) and the establishing phase (62%), underlining the centrality of family considerations for this group. Next to counting how many participants mentioned general family factors, this group of factors was divided by relation to parents, spouse and children. While there are little differences between family-related life phases for the mentions of parental factors, they were observable for factors connected to spouse and children. More agents in both the establishing (41%) and family phase (53%) than the phase of early adulthood (9%) mention their spouse as an influential factor in locational decisions. This can be easily explained by the lack of necessity of single migrants (although three referred to the influence of a potential “future spouse”) to include these factors in their decisions and only serves to validate the data. The same point holds true for the larger share of agents in the family phase (49% of 43 agents in this phase) that mentioned factors related to their children (the only group to consider the needs of children still in school) than in the other phases ($\Delta=-34\%p$ for establishing and $\Delta=-46\%p$ for early adulthood). These findings support the conceptualization that for agents in the phase of early adulthood, in the family sphere, it is parents that are included in the considerations about where to settle. Agents in the establishing phase considered parents and spouse in locational decisions to a similar degree, while are only 15% mentioned children. Among

Wang, Tang and Li 2014), the number of graduates with advanced degrees (PhDs) returning is low (Zeithammer and Kellogg 2013; Zhang 2014/03/30)

⁵⁷¹ However, this could be to the fact that agents in the phase of early adulthood may still be in the early stages of their migration processes and therefore perceive themselves as being “on track” in terms of their original intention. The same picture arises from the career sphere, in which the younger agents are also more likely to stick to their original plan.

⁵⁷² Z-Scores for family ranged from -1.11 to 3.05, based on mentions of family factors (0–6).

participants in the family phase, 50% mention factors related to parents, spouse and children, stressing the importance of family considerations and the necessity to meet the needs of various household members in this phase.

When examining individual factors, this image is further strengthened: For the specific factor of children's education, more agents from the family phase (26%, half of those who mentioned children as influential) than the establishing phase mention this (23% less). With rising responsibilities for multiple participants of the household, concerns about safety seem to rise: a higher share of agents in the family phase (44%) mentioned the fact that they thought China was insecure than those in the phase of early adulthood (17%). The only other factor that shows strong differences for the various life phases is from the factor group of individual objectives, including, for example, the wish to "experience life to the fullest while still young," to "experience life abroad" and "curiosity about foreign places." For this group of factors, more agents in the phase of early adulthood (69%) cited this than from the establishing (41%) or family phase (33%), suggesting that for younger agents, the time abroad is not only seen as a career investment but also a time to experience new things before settling down.

Agents of all family-related life phases show strong career and family orientations in their locational decisions. An examination of influential factors shows differences between the groups, though. The fact that family factors are more often mentioned by participants in the family phase is not surprising. It underlines the findings of Chapter 5 that in the family phase, agents need to both directly discuss *with* and consider the impact of a decision *on* household members. Concerns about parents remain stable throughout the life course, supporting the norm of filial piety often stressed by participants. Over the life course, factors from the spheres of lifestyle preferences are important to younger agents in the sense that these want to form new experiences before settling down in the future, while agents in the family phase largely neglect this group of factors only to include considerations about locational preferences in the establishing phase. This confirms Kley's (2011; 2009) findings that in the phase of early adulthood, the ability to pursue agents' interests weighs stronger than in other phases. Priorities shift over the life course, as can be derived from agents' emphasis on lifestyle preferences and family factors. The discrepancy for the specific factor of safety concerns between participants in the phase of early adulthood and its rising importance for agents in the family phase, for example, underscores this shift in priorities over the life course. Interestingly, though, career factors showed little differences⁵⁷³ for the various family-related life phases, reflecting the strong career orientation of all agents over the life course.

⁵⁷³ One exception exists for the factor of "bad chances for foreigners in Japan;" more agents in the family phase mentioned this than in the establishing phase (23% vs. 3%).

6.2.1.2 Career-related Life Course

The sample was divided not only by family-related, but also by career-related life phase. The term “career-related” was chosen so as to denote both educational careers and occupational careers.⁵⁷⁴ The distinction within this category is two-fold: B.A., M.A. and PhD students as well as those who had just only started out in their careers are included in the category of “student/starting out” (n=56), while division heads, middle and top management, working academics as well as entrepreneurs are considered “established in working life” (n=56). It is expected that those only just starting out in their careers aim to undertake all the necessary steps to establish a successful career: graduate from a prestigious university and invest in skills for the home labor market. Later in working life, career factors such as working environments, but also family factors and lifestyle preferences, for example of stability, could gain in importance. The following tables first show decisive factors for the direction and timing of locational decisions, before this subsection examines influential factors by phase in the career-related life course.

Table 6.13: Decisive Factors for Location by Career-related Life Phase (n=108), SRQ

	student/starting out (n=52)		established in working life (n=56)	
	n	percentage	n	percentage
career	16	31%	24	43%
career and family	9	17%	17	30%
family	19	37%	10	18%
lifestyle	8	15%	5	9%

compiled by the author.

As can be deduced from Table 6.13, there are differences between the groups for family factors (n=29): more students and young workers (37%) mention this as decisive than among those established in working life (18%). While this seems counterintuitive to the expectation that younger agents focus on their careers, the concept of parallel careers helps interpret this finding: before moving up in the company hierarchy and entering the established phase in their working lives, agents may have gotten married and started a family in the parallel career of family, possibly explaining the higher share of young workers and students stressing family factors as decisive in locational decisions. In addition, when including the combined factor of career and family, the difference between the

⁵⁷⁴ In order to avoid confusion with the concept of “parallel careers” (Willekens 1991) of Section 6.2.1.3, the terms “working lives”, “occupational” and “educational” careers are also used. In this section, however, the term refers only to education- and work-related careers and not to careers in other spheres of life such as family formation. See, for example, Daniel Courgeau (1990: 250) on the connection between mobility and “the family and career life-cycle.”

groups in the family sphere is not as high (54% for young, 48% for established workers). Nevertheless, established workers' emphasis of career remains higher (73% if the combined factor of career and family is included, vs. 48% for young workers). These findings stress the importance of the integrating perspective of parallel careers (see Section 6.2.1.3). When examining the factors deemed decisive for timing, there are some interesting differences.

Table 6.14: Decisive Factors for Timing of Mobility Decisions by Career-related Life Phase (n=111), SRQ

	student/starting out (n=55)		established in working life (n=56)	
	n	percentage	n	percentage
end of a set time frame	23	42%	13	23%
family reasons	2	4%	9	16%
career reasons	7	13%	20	36%
external events	3	5%	0	0%
no plans	20	36%	14	25%

compiled by the author.

A higher percentage among students and young workers expressed to stick to the original time frame of migration,⁵⁷⁵ but with more time spent abroad, the likelihood to deviate from the original time frame rises (see Chapter 5).⁵⁷⁶ Career-related reasons were explained to be decisive for timing by more of those established in working life (more than a third), in part because of how reasons were grouped: the end of a set time frame refers to the end of studies and of a set time frame for gaining working experience, which are given primarily by students. Career-related reasons only apply to those with working experience; cited were job offers, retirement, or unemployment. Migrants in the early phases of migration more often express to stick to their plans, mirroring findings for the family-related life phase.

Table 6.15: Point in the Decision-Making Process (n=111) and Deviation from Original Plan (n=99) by Career-related Life Phase, SRQ

	student/starting out		established in working life	
	n	percentage	n	percentage
made the decision	13	24%	40	71%
considering return	42	76%	16	29%
sticking to the plan	37	67%	15	34%
deviating from the plan	18	33%	29	66%

compiled by the author.

⁵⁷⁵ The data collected compare different agents in various life phases and do not include longitudinal data for the same agents; therefore, agents' self-assessments are of limited predictive power.

⁵⁷⁶ More students than young workers explain to stick to the original time frame (n=13 vs. 10).

A higher share of students and young workers than of those established in working life (33% difference) explains to stick to their original time plan, while 66% of older workers deviate from their original intentions. More of those established in their working lives have already made their settlement decisions,⁵⁷⁷ while three quarters of students are considering where to settle. This is another indicator for the validity of the impression that younger agents are more mobile and that with increasing ties (whether work-related or personal), the likelihood to settle rises, mirroring findings from the literature (e.g. DaVanzo 1981; DaVanzo and Morrison 1982; Faist 1997; Fischer and Malmberg 2001: 359).

In examining the factors that agents mentioned as influential in their locational decisions, analyses showed a (albeit low) positive (point-biserial) correlation ($r_{pb} = .210$, $n=112$) between agents naming a larger number of career factors (z-scores)⁵⁷⁸ and being established in working life (student/starting out coded 0, established in working life coded 1), thereby supporting the impression from Table 6.13. An examination of influential factors supports the findings reported in Section 6.1 in this chapter, namely that agents had a nuanced and balanced impression of career and lifestyle circumstances in Japan and in China.⁵⁷⁹ There were a few strong differences between the two groups: more of those who are established in working life than of the young workers mentioned the following factor groups: negative factors related to China in general (77% vs. 57%), which are further broken down to negative image of lifestyle preferences in China (71% vs. 52%), negative career perception in China (32% vs. 16%) but also in Japan (55% vs. 34% for young workers). A higher share of younger agents reported factors related to their parents in China (52% vs. 25%, in contrast to the factor of children (11% vs. 38%)), and to their individual objectives (59% vs. 34% for established workers).⁵⁸⁰ Zooming in on the individual factors that showed

⁵⁷⁷ As pointed out before, this must not be the final decision for participants of the study, although most frame it that way when explaining their return decisions. It cannot be excluded from the data available for this study that agents move again internationally; however, since the contribution of this study lies in the conceptualization of migration decisions, this is of limited relevance, as the decision-making process as presented in Chapter 5 starts over and the model thereby loses none of its applicability. For this chapter on the quantification of factors agents see as crucial in their mobility decisions, the factors reflect priorities of agents in different life phases, which shift over the life course. This in itself is reason to believe that the outcome of locational decisions must not be static. However, in the interplay between the decision-making model and factors influential in the process it is important that agents intend the mobility decisions to last long-term, which is true for all participants.

⁵⁷⁸ For career, z-scores ranged from -1.65 to 3.67. Z-Scores for career are based on how often participants mentioned career factors (0–13).

⁵⁷⁹ For example, 66% of participants established in working life perceived career chances in China positively as compared to a share of 32% who perceived them as negative. For lifestyle preferences among this group, the result is as follows: 86% reported positive, 62% negative aspects of living in Japan, compared to 64% of positive and 71% negative mentions of lifestyle factors in China.

⁵⁸⁰ Similar to the results for family-related life phase, more of the younger workers/students reported the wish to experience different things while still young (18% vs. 2%) and to experience life abroad than of those established in working life (25% vs. 5%).

differences for younger workers and students on the one hand and established workers on the other, it becomes clear that younger agents saw their stays in Japan as temporary and serving the purpose of career advancement. From a social perspective, more of them stress the single responsibility towards their parents (n=11, 16% vs. 4% established agents), express to feel better integrated in China (n=18, 25% vs. 7%) and feel that Japanese are too cold (n=22, 29% vs. 11%). They seek to finish their studies in Japan and gain more working experience (n=17, 25% vs. 5% among established workers), specifically to improve their position on the Chinese job market (n=21, 30% vs. 7%).⁵⁸¹ A higher share of those established in working life, in contrast, express liking Japanese people (n=21, 29% vs. 9% for young workers and students), a perception of life in Japan as more stable (n=21, 30% vs. 7%), being happy with their job in Japan (n=13, 20% vs. 2%) and well integrated into the Japanese business world (n=11 16% vs. 4%), despite another large share of agents criticizing the lack of upward mobility in the Japanese career system (n=13, 18% vs. 5%) and feeling that China is “exciting” (n=16, 23% vs. 5%). They stress children’s education (n=12, 20% vs. 2%) and for many among this group, siblings take care of ageing parents or parents have already passed (n=8, 12% vs. 2% for students/young workers).

Students and workers just starting out in their careers more often report to stick to their original intention, which is mirrored by the individual factors they enumerate as influential in their locational decisions; most of the younger agents refer to a limited time frame for the stay in Japan, to higher levels of social integration in China both in terms of friends and responsibilities towards parents (refer to Section 6.1.3 for levels of integration compared by career-related life phase). More of the workers with longer working experience report a very balanced image of both circumstances in Japan and China, although most of those in this group had decided on a life in China.

6.2.1.3 Parallel Careers

Some of the factors that showed strong differences in mentions for the groups divided by family- or career-related life phase overlapped, suggesting that they may be influential in parallel careers.⁵⁸² Willekens (1991: 18) expressed that careers, distinguished by “profession, employment, fertility, education, health, place of residence, etc.,” are interdependent. Especially fertility and employment are connected, and for most agents, “marriage, family and occupation are the

⁵⁸¹ This is mirrored in the findings for the family-related life phase, in which more of those in the phase of early adulthood expressed this than in the establishing phase.

⁵⁸² This includes the factors relating to the wish to experience new things at a young age, centrality of family considerations and the intention to stick to the original plan of migration. In later stages, family factors gain in importance, while the image of life in Japan and China become more nuanced.

central domains” (Willekens 1991: 11, 21). Agents may delay events in one sphere to focus on another or time events, for example from the family sphere, to accommodate goals or restrictions from the career sphere.⁵⁸³

A comparison between factors that agents from various spheres—related to work and education as well as family—deemed influential therefore could provide clues as to factors that are important to agents in parallel careers. The image derived from a division of the sample by family- and career-related life phase and an analysis of decisive and influential factors on mobility decisions (including the timing of mobility decisions and the gap between original intention and behavior) showed the following evolution of attitudes over the course of migration: young agents enter Japan with a temporary outlook and the firm conviction that they will stick to their original, mostly temporary, intention. The move to Japan is made for career reasons at the cost of separation from parents and social networks in China, accompanied by the wish to experience a variety of new things before settling down. If agents enter the family phase, family factors gain in importance, while the career orientation remains and the influence of lifestyle preferences diminishes. These two phases of young adulthood and family are likely to overlap with the career-related phase of students and young workers, who show both a strong family and career orientation. With deepening ties and the responsibility for a larger number of household members, the likelihood to deviate from the original migration intention rises for agents in the family and establishing phases. The event of childbirth leads to a reconsideration of locational decisions. Location-specific capital beneficial to successful business operations and feelings of integration rise after childbirth for agents in the family phase and over the course of migration for agents established in their working and private lives. The perception of career and lifestyle circumstances in Japan and China becomes more nuanced for agents established in working life. If career chances, central to all participants, and household member satisfaction appear similar in Japan and China, lifestyle preferences become more influential.

While family events increase the likelihood to consider migration, the decision made afterwards by agents in the family phase is intended as a long-term settlement decision. In addition to a simple comparison between career- and family-related life phases, the sample was divided to differentiate those that felt either mobile or settled in both their family and working lives, from those that felt differently in either sphere.⁵⁸⁴ More of those who felt settled in family (and career (84%)/but not in career (73%)) had already made the decision of where to settle internationally than those feeling mobile in both spheres (25%), while a higher

⁵⁸³ Willekens (1991: 25–26), in referring to the literature on the subject, gives the examples of families timing the birth of children closer or further apart so as to ease the reintegration of women back into the labor market or to ensure a continuous income to provide good education to several children.

⁵⁸⁴ 66 agents felt mobile in job and family, 11 mobile in job but settled in family, 3 mobile in family but settled in job and 32 settled both in family and job.

share of those who feel mobile in job and family are still unsure/considering where to settle (75%). For the work- and education- as well as family-related life phase, there are similar findings in the category of whether agents stick to their originals plans or not: more in the phase of early adulthood in the family-related life phase and of those only starting out in their occupational careers express to stick to it, while more of those in the establishing and family phase as well as those established in their working lives express to deviate. This is mirrored by a higher share of those feeling mobile in job and family that stick to their plan (65%) than those who feel settled (21%) and vice versa for those deviating from it.

Specifically, for family factors, there were differences by life phases: agents in the early career-related phase (52%) and those who felt mobile in family and working lives (53%) were more likely to cite factors connected to their parents in China than those more established in working (and family) life. Yet, those who felt settled in career and family more often mention factors related to their spouse (54% vs. 26% than those feeling mobile in both spheres) and children (43% vs. 14% than those who feel mobile in both spheres). (A similar picture for family-related life phase and, for children, also education- and occupation-related life phase was found.) This supports the concept of parallel careers in family and working lives, in that younger agents refer to parents and older agents more advanced in the family-related and occupational life course refer to spouse and children. For the individual factors, another similarity is found for the family factors surrounding children; those in the family phase and those established in working life refer to children's education, suggesting an overlap that is strengthened by the fact that a higher share of those feeling settled in (career and) family cite this factor than those feeling mobile (28% settled in both family and job, 18% settled in family and mobile in job vs. 2% feeling mobile in both spheres). Younger agents (phase of early adulthood and starting out in their occupational careers) explain their locational decisions with individual objectives of experiencing life abroad and living to the fullest while still free from more serious obligations, which is also reflected for those feeling mobile in career and family (65% vs. 25% for those settled in job and family).

Some factors are mentioned both by agents in later family and occupational life phases, specifically family factors; this can be explained by parallel careers. With rising family responsibilities, agents face more financial liabilities and vice versa: agents who are established in working life are likely to also have to provide for family at home. Agents who only just starting out in their careers are often not married and value the opportunity to freely travel and take on new responsibilities at work, but once they enter the family phase, they are likely to value factors such as stability, mention more family factors and be less mobile. Once the children enter university, for example, mobility levels and the focus on career factors may rise again; a look at parallel careers, therefore, gives a more holistic explanation of why which factors are of importance when for which agents.

6.2.2 Gender

It can be expected that there are differences in the spheres that men and women in the sample stress as decisive and influential in their locational decisions that can be explained by agents' adherence to gender roles.⁵⁸⁵ The process of negotiating a family's location, studies have found, is influenced by gender role ideology (Bielby and Bielby 1992: 1245; Cooke 2008; Ellis, Conway and Bailey 1996: 125). It is often men who initiate family migration (Cooke 2008: 255; Gemici 2011: 29; see also Purkayastha 2005: 182; Willis and Yeoh 2000: 258). Men and women face different hurdles in the migration process; this refers, for example, to labor market and social integration. Migration can have a liberating effect on women, as Pessar (1998: 65) explains, as they feel more independent being away from their parents, and even within their marital relationship secure higher levels of gender equity (e.g. Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Men, in turn, favor returning to regain privileges they might have lost by moving, feeling less integrated in the destination country and less able to move up in both society and in their careers (Pessar 1998: 65). Based on these findings, it can be expected that both men and women stress career factors, while women refer also to their family responsibilities and roles as emotional caregivers as well as the wish to break out of these roles for a while. Men, in turn, would focus on career factors, show a preference for the home country and stress their roles as providers for the family.

Table 6.16: Decisive Factors for Location by Gender (n=108), SRQ

	male (n=59)		female (n=49)	
	n	percentage	n	percentage
career	29	49%	11	22%
career and family	18	31%	8	16%
family	8	14%	21	43%
lifestyle	4	7%	9	18%

compiled by the author.

In participants' explanations of what is the decisive factor to return to China or stay in Japan, the expectations sketched above could be largely confirmed. More men than women refer to career factors,⁵⁸⁶ while a higher percentage of women explains locational decisions with family factors.⁵⁸⁷ Breaking down these decisive factor groups, it shows that women rather stress factors related to their families

⁵⁸⁵ Agents in the sample expressed to identify as either male or female and none of them openly referred to a sexual orientation other than heterosexuality.

⁵⁸⁶ Among the influential factors, 84% of men mentioned career factors vs. 59% of women.

⁵⁸⁷ As has been shown in the previous subsection, agents in the family phase are more likely to name family factors as decisive for return decision. Within this group, it is more of the women who express this: 64% vs. 17% of men in the family phase. In the establishing phase, more men than women mentioned career as the decisive factor to return or settle (78% vs. 29%).

(18% vs. 5% of men), specifically their spouses (14% vs. 3%), while men stress that their home, family and career is in China (25% vs. 6% of women),⁵⁸⁸ or only that they perceive their career to be better in China (26% vs. 8%). A look at the decisive factors for timing shows no large differences between men and women, except for the category of “no plans,” which is stated by more female agents.

Table 6.17: Decisive Factors for Timing of Mobility Decisions by Gender (n=111), SRQ

	male (n=61)		female (n=50)	
	n	percentage	n	Percentage
end of a set time frame	23	38%	13	26%
family reasons	7	11%	4	8%
career reasons	18	30%	9	18%
external events	1	2%	2	4%
no plans	12	20%	22	44%

compiled by the author.

A look at the stage in the decision-making process reveals that more men (59%) in the sample have made the decision of where to settle than women (34%), while two thirds of the women are still considering whether and when to return. There are few differences between men and women for their level of adherence to their original length of stay in Japan.⁵⁸⁹

The stronger career orientation of men that is influential in locational decisions is underlined if examining factor groups: more men than women cite career factors connected to China (84% vs. 59% , n=81), specifically positive ones (69% vs. 47% of n=66) and negative career factors for Japan (57% vs. 29%, n=50). Women, in contrast, more often cite factors from the sphere of lifestyle preferences (86% vs. 59% of n=80), specifically related to their identity (71% vs. 34%, n=57), and factors relating to their parents in China (49% vs. 30%, n=43). Broken down to the individual factors agents cite as influential in their locational decisions, differences in career perceptions for Japan and China become even clearer: more women express that they see their careers as better in Japan (14% vs. 3% of men) and better work contents in Japan (12% vs. 2%), while more men perceive their careers to be better in China (25% vs. 10% of women), more seek a new career challenge (15% vs. 2%), cite a lack of upward mobility in Japan (18% vs. 4%) and a dislike of Japanese working styles (34% vs. 12%).⁵⁹⁰ In many categories, however, women and men express the same factors as influential for their career

⁵⁸⁸ In answering where they felt at home (unrelated to their locational decision), more men than women expressed to feel at home in China (85% vs. 63% of women) compared to in Japan or in both places.

⁵⁸⁹ About half of each group stick to or deviate from the original plan (among men, 52% deviate and 48% adhere to the plan, among women, it is 57% and 43% respectively).

⁵⁹⁰ When examining perception of factors from the career sphere without including their impact on locational decisions, more men than women expressed to prefer Chinese working styles (41 vs. 22%).

decision, for example, the determination to finish studies in Japan (38% men, 39% women) or the perception of bad career chances for foreigners in Japan (15% men, 16% women). In terms of agency, a higher share of women expressed that they did not make the original migration decision themselves (24% vs. 5% of men). For family factors, more women than men explain that wanting to be close to family (22% vs. 7% of men) is influential in their locational decisions. However, about the same percentage of men and women expressed the plan to return to ageing parents in the future (average of 21%). In the sphere of lifestyle preferences, more women than men state that the fact that they feel comfortable in Japan is influential in their decision-making processes (25% vs. 8%), and that they have gotten used to Japan (22% vs. 8%), while they “do not know China anymore” (16% vs. 2%). A higher share of the women express the wish to experience different things while still young (20% vs. 2%) and a confused national identity⁵⁹¹ (25% vs. 2%). Men explain that Japan is more stable (30% vs. 6%) and life in Japan convenient (28% vs. 8%) and that the environment is good (38% vs. 20%).⁵⁹² A higher percentage of men mention to dislike Chinese politics (30% vs. 8%). In answering questions about the perception of freedom in Japan and China, unrelated to locational decisions, more men expressed to be constrained by social pressure in Japan (21% vs. 6%) and political constraints in China (30% vs. 8%) than women.

Some of the original expectations based on gender role ideology, namely that women stress family factors while men focus on career and being the provider for their families, can be confirmed for the sample. More men than women stress career factors, prefer China for work-related reasons, but praise aspects of stability and safety in Japan. They view Japan and China critically in terms of freedom, but feel more at home and well-integrated in China. More women than men, in contrast, cite family factors and, especially in the earlier life phases, the wish to experience different things before settling down. In women’s decisions, other family participants possess more power in their locational considerations than in men’s. For women, the impact of gender roles in the sense that they feel they must be good daughters and spouses weighs strongly in their decisions, while all women intend to further push their careers. Migration experiences in the early life phases are experienced as providing the opportunity to live more independently before settling down and/or having to return to fulfill family duties (see also Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Pessar 1998: 65). Women in the sample feel generally better integrated in Japan and while almost half of the women in the sample (47%) mention that their Chinese identity influences their locational decisions, more women than men (25% vs. 2%) express to also feel Japanese. In contrast, men

⁵⁹¹ This code was given if agents did not refer to feeling only Chinese or Japanese but both; this could be termed binational or bicultural, yet, due to agents’ statements of being confused by these mixed feelings, the term “confused national identity” was chosen to reflect the complex feeling behind this.

⁵⁹² More men than women express that children’s education is influential in their locational decision (15% vs. 6%).

expressed strong attachment to China (85% of men only felt at home in China) and lower levels of integration in Japan.⁵⁹³ They perceived their careers as better in China and Japanese working life as not beneficial to their careers. This could confirm Pessar's (1998: 65) findings that men are likely to feel a loss of status and privilege with migration, aggravated by impeded upward social mobility, and therefore prefer to return in order to regain privileges.

6.2.3 Occupation

Agents from different occupations should vary in the factors they stress as influential in their locational decisions (Mahroum 2000; Solimano 2008). While academics can be expected to value freedom of and stable funding for their research, entrepreneurs are likely to value preferential tax policy and be rather immobile due to dependence on their location-specific capital (e.g., regular clientele), to name but a few examples. Managers and executives are likely to prefer working environments with high levels of independence, while for young workers, starting salaries, upward mobility, levels of technology and opportunities for skill expansion are more likely to matter in locational decisions. This section therefore looks both at career stage and occupation, included in the group of "occupation" (divided by managers and executives, middle management, engineers and technicians, academics and scientists, entrepreneurs and students, relying heavily on Mahroum's (2000) conceptualization; all categories are further broken down by field of employment: finance and consulting, engineering, sales and trade, education and research, IT, law, other).

Table 6.18: Decisive Factors for Location by Occupation (n=108), SRQ

	manager/ executive (n=15)		middle management (n=18)		engineer/ technician (n=10)		academic/ scientist (n=11)		entre- preneur (n=15)		Student (n=39)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
career	9	7	9	50	1	10	4	36	5	33	12	31
career and family	4	27	2	11	2	20	4	36	6	40	8	21
family	1	7	5	28	6	60	3	27	2	13	12	31
lifestyle	1	7	2	11	1	10	0	0	2	13	7	18

compiled by the author.

⁵⁹³ As Mahler and Pessar (2006: 33) have pointed out, men and women even within the same household form different networks and therefore have access to different resources; in the sample, men had more social contacts in China from which they hoped to benefit emotionally and in their occupational life, while women were better integrated in Japan than men.

While there are strong differences observable between groups, these can be explained by the differences in case numbers (there are four times more students than engineers, for example) and generally low case numbers that, in addition to the sample being non-representative, do not allow for generalization.

When examining the timing (Table 6.19), there are only few group differences that stand out: more of the managers and executives explained that career-related reasons were decisive for the timing as compared to students, which is in part due to coding and little surprising given the different career stage of students and the fact that finishing the degree was included in the factor of “end of a set time frame” and not career events. If broken down by work contents, more in finance and consulting (50%) referred to career-related reasons as decisive for the timing of decisions than those working in education and research (8%).

Table 6.19: Decisive Factors for Timing of Mobility Decisions by Occupation (n=111), SRQ

	manager/ executive (n=15)		middle management (n=20)		engineer/ technician (n=10)		academic/ scientist (n=11)		entre- preneur (n=15)		student (n=40)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
end of set time frame	3	20	6	30	4	40	3	27	2	13	18	45
family	2	13	1	5	1	10	2	18	4	27	1	2
career	8	52	7	35	4	40	1	9	3	29	4	10
external	0	0	1	5	1	10	0	0	0	0	1	2
no plans	2	13	5	25	0	0	5	45	6	40	16	40

compiled by the author.

When it comes to the stage in the locational decision-making process, a higher share of students is still considering whether and where to settle than all other groups (85% vs. an average of 35%),⁵⁹⁴ while more students (75%) express to stick to their original plan compared to managers and executives (18%) or participants of the middle management (32%). While the low case numbers can only show tendencies, this can be interpreted to reflect the findings of the previous section on life phase, namely that younger agents are more likely to explain to stick to their original intention than agents settled in working (and family) life. More

⁵⁹⁴ Examining the stage in the decision-making process by occupation in the sample, more of those in finance and consulting (79%) than in sales and trade (25%) already made their decision.

participants working in finance and consulting (82%) than in education and research (36%) and sales and trade (29%) deviate from their original plan.⁵⁹⁵

In examining the factor groups that agents deemed influential in their locational decisions, occupations differ for negative career in Japan (mentioned by 68% of agents working in finance and consulting vs. 25% in education and research) and matters of character and national identity (71% of academics mentioned this vs. 20% working in IT). All occupations compared career and lifestyle factors for Japan and China: engineers and academics, for example, reported a more positive image of career and lifestyle in Japan and more criticism of China. When examining differences between groups, for example, the factor of “better network in China” was cited by more engineers and technicians (50%) than agents in middle management (5%) or students (2%). This could refer to the fact that agents in the middle management had spent more time on the Japanese labor market and possessed higher location-specific capital there, while students not yet possessed such a network.⁵⁹⁶ A lack of internet accessibility in China is criticized by a larger share of entrepreneurs (27%) than of students (2%). In response to questions unrelated to the influence of factors on locational decisions, more of those in the middle management (85%) than students (39%) saw more job chances in China. This could be related to the perception of limited upward mobility for foreigners in Japan, specifically for agents already in higher positions, who feel as though they have hit a glass ceiling. Examining integration, a higher share of entrepreneurs expressed that they felt at home in both Japan and China (47% vs. 10% students), while the picture is reversed for students of whom more express to feel at home in China than entrepreneurs (88% vs. 47%). Entrepreneurs also feel better integrated in Japan than students (80% vs. 32%), while students feel better integrated in China than entrepreneurs (83% vs. 40%). This could be explained by their time spent in Japan, but also location specific capital; entrepreneurs need to be well-connected with clients and co-workers, while students feel freshly taken out of their usual environment.

Findings in this section generally support the perspective outlined in Section 6.2.1 on the life course: the younger the agents, the less integrated they are and the more they focus on the temporary aspect of increasing their human capital. Agents established on the Japanese labor market are better integrated in Japan and have more knowledge about their career chances in Japan and China. However, for many aspects concerning career opportunities in Japan and China, there are few differences within the groups, which could imply that the perception of career factors is similar regardless of occupation, yet the difference in group size makes this finding only little reliable. The heterogeneity of the sample, purposively

⁵⁹⁵ These three groups are similar in size (24–28 participants per group).

⁵⁹⁶ However, the fact that only few agents in the middle management mentioned the factor of having a better network in China does not mean that they do not have a good network in China, only that they did not see this factor as influential in their locational decisions.

chosen to show similarities in decision-making processes, limits the comparability of specific factors if the sample is divided by occupation. Further research on the different perceptions across occupations with larger sample size for each group is necessary to validate findings about the impact of perception of career factors on locational decisions by occupation.

6.3 Summary

This chapter analyzed which factors were of importance in the locational decisions of participants and how the impact differed by gender and occupation and how it evolved over the life course. At the center stood the questions of why migrants return or why they settle in the destination country and why some adhere to their original (return) migration intention while others do not. Factors were divided into the three spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences, which differed in impact by gender, life phase and, contrary to prior expectations, not very strongly by occupation (as conceptualized in this study). Results were discussed in the individual subchapters, which is why this section summarizes the most important empirical findings, integrating those that *mirror*, and highlighting those that *differ* from the picture painted in the literature. How the findings of the quantitative analysis contribute to the understanding of the decision-making process as presented in Chapter 5 is discussed in Chapter 7.

The quantitative analysis confirmed findings already reported in the literature on the influence of economic and family factors in migration. In addition, it showed that both the expansion of the perspective on influential factors in migration as well as a stronger differentiation in the conceptualization of life phases are necessary. Almost 70% of the highly skilled participants entered Japan with temporary intentions, 97% with the intention to invest in their human capital and improve their career chances, reflecting both Japan's migration policy that uses student migration as a way of importing skilled labor (Liu-Farrer 2009a) and the temporary intentions of many Chinese newcomers in Japan that only recently have begun to show increasing settlement tendencies (Liu-Farrer 2009b; Tajima 2005). The chapter analyzed how (return) migration intentions change both over the course of migration and over the life course and how factors from the spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences influence migration behavior.

a) Career Factors over the Course of Migration

Initially, participants enter Japan with the intention of improving their careers, and career considerations remain central for the highly skilled participants over the course of migration. Younger agents stress the goal of graduating from a prestigious university and gaining working experience in technologically

advanced Japan, highlighting their temporary outlook. Agents established in their working lives closely examine working styles, upward mobility and the applicability of skills. Across age groups and life phases, participants' impression of career chances for foreigners in Japan is not favorable, yet considerations about the competitive edge participants will gain through working experience in Japan and about work contents (advanced technological level, higher degree of academic freedom) increase the attractiveness of working in Japan if only for a limited time. For locational decisions, considerations in the career sphere therefore go beyond only economic differences and development gaps between host and home country and include preferences of working styles and environments, career strategies, and the goals agents seek to achieve through work. When examining the meaning of work for participants through the lens of Social Production Functions theory, it shows that it serves as a tool to achieve first-order instrumental goals, including stimulation through challenging work contents, comfort through a stable income, status as induced by occupation, behavioral confirmation and affection by doing meaningful work and through being acknowledged at work. The first two instrumental goals in Social Production Function Theory (Ormel *et al.* 1999) contribute to physical well-being, the latter three to social well-being. Instrumental goals are substitutable and can be produced by other means than work; in addition, work does not produce these instrumental goals for all agents, of course. For all participants, however, satisfaction in working life, however they define it, is crucial to subjective well-being. Participants compare career chances and the potential of occupational satisfaction between Japan and China. Therefore, career remains central in participants' lives and locational decisions.

b) Family Factors over the Course of Migration

In locational decisions, the sphere of family, to be more precise, factors related to parents, spouse and children, is of comparable importance to career considerations. Which factors participants considered and how strong the impact was differed by life phase and gender. Intimate ties are crucial for the instrumental goal of affection in SPF theory, and within the sample it could be observed that participants of any age referred to the influence of their parents in locational decisions. Many bring up their responsibility towards elderly parents, some sought their parents' approval (behavioral confirmation), and some relied on them financially especially early in the migration process (comfort).

In the initial migration decision, participants choose a temporary separation from parents or significant others in China in order to achieve career goals that may serve to improve participants' family lives as well, for example, through the ability to provide for parents, spouse and children. Some of the younger participants even see their time in Japan as a moratorium concerning their family life, as a time to focus solely on career and personal development, while they

intend to settle down and form a family only upon return to China. In return migration decisions, the wish to be close to family and meet their needs generally plays a larger role than for initial migration. With an expansion of household size comes the necessity to include more agents in locational decision-making processes, and the impact of relocation or settlement has to be examined for all household members. During these life phase transitions, the likelihood to consider relocation rises (Kley 2011), yet once children are born and especially when they reach school age, agents become less likely to move. Agents with school-aged or older children, established in their family and working lives less often have a set plan for return at the time of the interview and are more likely to have deviated from their original intention. They have formed deep connections in Japan and possess location-specific capital, they compare factors from all three spheres of career, family and lifestyle preferences in Japan and China and show a nuanced analysis of where they see better chances of subjective well-being.

There were differences in mentions of career and family by gender: men more often referred to career, women to family factors, yet a closer examination of men's answers reveals that factors from the spheres of career and lifestyle preferences are closely connected to their goal of providing for their families: they stress stability, good education and the wish to raise children in China, where they feel more at home. Women, in turn, directly refer to their role as daughter, spouse and mother and the responsibility to care for their family members. Probably connected to this adherence to gender-role ideology is (young) women's emphasis on the wish to experience new things before settling down, which forms part of lifestyle preferences.

c) Lifestyle Preferences over the Course of Migration

The influence of the third sphere, lifestyle preferences, was mentioned by almost all agents as influential, yet contents differed over the life course and by gender. Younger agents more often cited factors related to personal development, curiosity about life abroad and the wish to experience a different way of life before settling down, stressing the intention of a temporary stay in Japan. Participants more established in their working and family lives value stability in Japan and compare circumstances in Japan and China. Women generally have a more favorable opinion of Japan and are better integrated, while men generally prefer life in China for career, family and lifestyle reasons. Factors such as identity, or living according to one's own wishes, are difficult to integrate into Social Production Functions theory, yet they play a role in agents' subjective well-being and in their locational decisions. While work and family are central pillars in locational decisions and in subjective well-being, when agents perceive both aspects as achievable in China and Japan, lifestyle preferences can be expected to gain in

importance. Agents, depending on which goal is the most important at a given point in time, compromise in other spheres.

One limitation of the results presented in this chapter relates to just this factor: participants were not asked to rank a previously defined set of factors for its impact on agents' locational decisions or their importance, which is why the interplay of influential factors remains unknown. Instead, participants were asked to reflect on a variety of factors influential in their locational decisions and to name the most important one(s). This approach was chosen to allow participants to place influential factors into the relevant context, reflect on the influence of factors from various spheres and explain how certain factors changed in impact over the course of migration. This is an explorative approach that is better suited to showing which factors agents *consciously* consider in locational decisions. As the analysis of decisive and influential factors of this chapter shows, the results largely mirror findings of migration literature which usually focuses on one sphere; the study combines findings to create a holistic explanation for migration and settlement decisions rooted in the perceptions of migrants.⁵⁹⁷

d) Migration Behavior

Results of the study confirm that the likelihood to consider migration rises with life phase transitions. Family- and career-related life phases as well as locational trajectories are closely intertwined, supporting Willekens' (1991; 1987) concept of parallel careers. Participants come to Japan to invest in their human capital, revisiting their locational decision when graduation from university draws near, after gaining a certain amount of working experience, when they move in with a partner, get married or decide to start a family, to name but a few points in time. This is in line with findings from the literature (Kley 2011: 470; 2009). On the basis of these findings, the study analyzed why some agents at these crucial points in time decide to return or to stay, zooming in on the decision-making process in the previous and on the contents of said process in this chapter.

Career considerations remain central throughout the course of migration and the life course, yet the contents differ: younger agents stress temporary intentions for their stays in Japan, during which they seek to benefit from Japan's advanced economic and technological level. They are willing to accept lower levels of upward mobility, as they see the time in Japan as an investment into their future careers. Agents established in working life place more emphasis on work contents, working styles, and upward mobility. The interesting question is when the switch happens from having the firm intention to return at a specific point in time, to

⁵⁹⁷ As Dumont and Spielvogel (2007: 203) put it: "migrants generally pursue several concomitant objectives, and those objectives may vary over the lifecycle. Migrants plan their migration pathway, and their return, in light of their individual and family objectives, but they also take account of opportunities in the home country."

deciding to extend the stay. Based on the findings of the study, it can be hypothesized that this depends on the “migration behavior” agents adopt during their time in Japan. As migration is a process, migration behavior also encompasses the actions migrants take in the destination country. Agents form location-specific capital in the “new” location, build up ties to other agents, their perceptions of life in Japan and in China change, and they may increasingly undertake actions that could be interpreted as settlement behavior. This process is intensified when agents enter the Japanese labor market as compared to being in university, or when they form romantic relationships in Japan with someone intending to stay there. It is especially in the family phase that the event of marriage or childbirth increases the likelihood to consider migration (as many Chinese see the Chinese education system as superior, refer to the presence of parents who help with childrearing in China and the wish to support a Chinese identity in the child). However, after the birth of children, agents become less likely to move, as they usually seek to provide stability for the children. Agents established in their working and family lives stress career and family, but lifestyle preferences again increase in importance in locational decisions (feeling comfortable and well-integrated, living according to one’s own preferences). For younger agents that extend their stays without a connection to their family-related life phase, this may have to do with enjoying the degree of freedom that is associated with being outside of where they think they ought to be, building a career in China, taking care of parents, intensifying the notion of experiencing new things before (inevitably?) settling down.

In order to explain migration behavior, it is therefore necessary to look at shifting priorities and gender differences (within the household) over the life course, and evolving levels of integration and perception of circumstances in home and host country over the course of migration. While life phase transitions in both occupational and educational careers as well as in family life are points in time when migrants consider relocation, migration behavior can only be explained by an examination of the decision-making process, of migrants’ perceptions of problem and goals as well as where they see their goals as achievable based on their evolved perception of circumstances in host and home country and of behavioral control. A single focus on career, family or lifestyle preferences is insufficient; explanations for international return migration and settlement must integrate the three perspectives.

7 Discussion and Conclusion

The study at hand sheds light on the mobility behavior of highly skilled Chinese in Japan. It thereby contributes a piece to the puzzle surrounding the rise in international labor migration (ILO 2013; UNPD 2013), exploring how various factors influence this particular group of migrants in their locational decisions. Both Japan and China have devised policies aimed at attracting highly skilled and increasing the share of skilled workers in their economies (Komine 2014: 213–215; Nyíri 2005: 156; Tsuda and Cornelius 2004: 449–450; Zhuang 2013: 39). These government policies implicitly buy into the belief that human capital is transferable (Favell, Feldblum and Smith 2006: 17; Meyer 2001), and even though some policies now include additional (non-pecuniary) benefits,⁵⁹⁸ the focus remains on economic rationales of the migrants. This understanding of the underlying motivations for migration of highly skilled fails to adequately address (changing) priorities of this group over the life course.

Another puzzle in the field of international migration is not only *why* highly skilled move, but also *when* (and how often), and *where*. While migration theory slowly does move away from the unidirectional settlement migration paradigm (Hugo 2003), return migration has received little academic attention,⁵⁹⁹ which culminates in Cassarino's (2004: 253) assessment that our understanding of this phenomenon "remains hazy." Early conceptualizations hypothesized that migrants return to their country of origin if they have reached or have failed to achieve their goals of migration, by the failure to integrate, or that they return with retirement (Cerese 1974). While initial goals of migration are important in migration decisions, a focus on these goals alone lacks the understanding of how environments and goals shift over time. For the question of when migrants return, an examination of initial goals falls short in explaining migration behavior: in fact, "migrants' intentions at the time of departure are poor predictors of actual behavior" (Castles and Miller 2009: 20).

At the center of this explorative study stands the question of why some of the highly skilled Chinese migrants to Japan return to China and others settle abroad, with a special focus on the question of why some migrants deviate from their

⁵⁹⁸ These benefits include favorable tax policy, preferential treatment for land rent or residence in China (Luo, Guo and Huang 2003: 92; Nyíri 2005: 156; Zhuang 2013: 39), and favorable visa and employment policies for spouses as well as the option of bringing parents to Japan in the point-based visa system for highly skilled in Japan (Komine 2014: 215).

⁵⁹⁹ The same question persists for onward movement (DaVanzo and Morrison 1982).

original migration intention. In semi-structured interviews, participants of various life phases and occupations in different stages of their locational decision-making processes reflected on factors they considered important and crucial for their migration behavior. In this way, it was possible to generate a holistic explanation for migration behavior. Section 7.1 integrates the qualitative and quantitative findings of Chapters 5 and 6, while Section 7.2 points out the implications of these findings for migration, decision and Social Production Functions theory. Section 7.3 concludes the study by pointing out its implications beyond academia, focusing on migrants' subjective well-being and its influence in locational decisions of the highly skilled participants in this study.

7.1 Discussion of Quantitative and Qualitative Results: Migration Decisions

At certain points over the course of migration, agents reflect on their locational decisions. This is particularly the case when the end of a set time frame draws near. A reconsideration of where agents see their goals as achievable can also happen at other points in time: with promotions, unemployment, cohabitation, child birth, sudden illness etc. While agents are certain to include a locational aspect in their situation assessment at the end of a set time frame (meaning that they look at goal achievement and levels of satisfaction in *Japan*), other events are more likely to lead to an assessment of satisfaction in specific spheres of agents' lives. Achieving a goal of migration, for example, reaching a certain point in the company hierarchy, may lead to a decision-making process in which the agent decides to refocus his attention on his private life, but he may also think about how to further advance in his career. Reaching a goal of migration alone, therefore, is not enough to explain movement; it is the goals an agent sets afterwards, or the problem the agent identifies as causing his failure that influence the return migration decision-making process.

Situation Analysis

Contents of situation assessment, definition and framing of the underlying problem as well as the spheres in which new goals are set, are likely to differ by life phase. The trigger to the decision-making process may be a life phase transition, for example, starting a family. This event changes priorities. In fact, participants in the family phase more often referred to family factors in their locational decisions than participants in the establishing or early adulthood phases. Family factors comprised being a good child to parents (in old age), supporting one's partner, and providing a safe environment as well as good education for

children.⁶⁰⁰ The influence of each role (being a good child to ageing parents, good spouse and parent) and how agents think they ought to fulfill them varies with life phase. Over the course of their careers, priorities of participants for their working lives also differed: young agents focused on gaining skills that would improve their competitive edge on the Chinese labor market, while older agents looked for employment, in which they could bring in their skills, had upward mobility and fitting work contents. This difference in priorities in careers therefore is likely to influence situation assessment and subsequent problem definition/framing or setting of new goals. Agents never referred to lifestyle preferences as crucial in locational decisions, including goals of personal development, although these shape locational preferences and influence the framing of a problem and option evaluation. Young agents, especially women, often connect the primary reason for migration to Japan, namely increasing their human capital, to personal development and the wish to experience new things. The experience in Japan, therefore, serves as a way to break out from what many see as their inevitable family-related trajectory in China, namely to start a family and to care for parents. The wish to extend this focus on career to personal development can therefore be hypothesized as influencing the timing of return migration, and, in the conceptualization of decision-making processes, the framing of underlying problems, setting of new goals and option evaluation. Older agents, men in particular, place emphasis on stability, integration into friendship networks, and ways of interaction with co-workers and friends. They have a nuanced impression of their lifestyle preferences in Japan and China, which plays into their situation assessment. Depending on the situation in their family and also working lives, these preferences are of varying importance.

Option Evaluation

The stage of option evaluation is directly influenced by the previous stage of situation analysis; contents are likely to differ by stage in the migration process and life phase, primary goals, gender role ideology and perception of behavioral control. In the phase of identification of options, return migration is almost always included, yet not necessarily considered as a solution in depth. In early stages of the migration process, before the participant has reached the minimum goal of migration (usually graduation), he is unlikely to consider seriously long-term return, yet the likelihood rises with life phase transitions and events in his occupational career.⁶⁰¹ Female participants married to Japanese men generally rule

⁶⁰⁰ Especially in the sphere of education there were diverging opinions as to where the children would benefit the most, as men stressed identity formation and competitive ability in China, while women focused on their role as emotional caregivers to their families.

⁶⁰¹ This supports Cerase's (1974) finding that migrants at least *consider* return after having reached the (initial) goals of migration.

out return migration, as do academics with tenure in Japan, entrepreneurs and workers who prefer living in Japan and whose parents do not rely on them. Another group of participants is unsure whether they will return, for example, with retirement. Most of these have been in Japan for about 20 years, are well-integrated into their business field and friendship networks. They differ by their preference for life in Japan from those wanting to stay in Japan long-term but who envisage return at an undefined point in the future. If participants have decided to settle in Japan long-term, even if they frame the underlying problem of their dissatisfaction as connected to Japan, they will search for solutions to the problem *in Japan*, while agents who have not made that decision always include return migration in the list of options. This further strengthens the temporary outlook, even if participants have been in Japan for over a decade. In addition to the stage in the migration process (length of stay, level of goal achievement and point in the long-term locational decision-making process), life phase plays a role in option evaluation.

Agents analyze the identified options not only for their ability to solve problems or reach individual goals, but also for their impact on agents' immediate social networks. This refers to spouse and children, but also parents, and, if the agent is an entrepreneur, his employees. This inclusion of other agents in the decision-making process (negotiating various options with them or simulating the impact of an option on them) affects agents' perception of behavioral control, which, in turn, depends on their individual norms (including gender-role ideology). For example, if an agent expects to benefit from return in his career and also prefers living in China, but knows that his spouse is opposed to return (and a child is enrolled in school in Japan), he will probably look for a solution to his problem in Japan and not risk marital discord (and a disruption of his child's education). This depends on the priorities of the agents: some participants do return, accepting temporary separation from their families or negotiating with their spouses to return with them. Nevertheless, the presence of spouse and children influences how the option of return is evaluated, while primary goals that differ individually and over time in addition to behavioral control influence the outcome of the decision-making process. Behavioral control refers not only to an agent's ability to negotiate his preferred option with his network, but also agents' understanding of labor markets, economic, welfare and immigration policies as well as living conditions in various places. Agents' perceptions of glass ceilings in upward mobility of foreigners in Japan as compared to more career chances in China, the transferability of skills and pensions, of educational quality and care provisions for ageing parents, all influence the evaluation of options.

Option evaluation is not only influenced by primary goals and how agents think they should behave in their careers and private lives, but also by preferences. While career and family factors are central to participants and agents weigh the influence of options on both spheres in the evaluation process, when they decide between several options, lifestyle preferences play a role. For example, if agents

perceive the quality of career chances in both countries to be the same, and they are generally willing to relocate and break off ties they had built up in Japan over the course of migration, the preference for living in China is likely to tip the scale in favor of return. In some cases, it does more than that; some agents are willing to compromise in family and career in order to live according to their lifestyle preferences. This refers to identity issues, goals of personal development, but also religious or political convictions. These findings underline the importance of examining both the individual hierarchy of goals which shifts over time and perceptions of behavioral control of the individual agent.

Planning the Behavior and Actions

In the decision-making processes sketched out above, an agent may decide to return, but also to continue his stay in Japan and find a solution there, such as switching employers. If he decides on return migration, this involves lesser decisions and actions in preparation of the final action of relocation, as described in Chapter 5. However, intervening variables may abort, delay or rush the plan. For example, agents who had decided to stay in Japan for another set time frame, and, as a result, had signed an employment contract, reevaluated this decision in the aftermath of the 3/11 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Some decided to return permanently, others for a limited time frame and again others readjusted their settlement intention and set a time frame for return.

7.2 Implications of the Findings for Theory Development

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings of this study contains implications for a) migration theory (why do agents move/settle and why do they deviate from their original migration intention?), b) decision-making theory (redefinition of stages and identification of new phases), and c) the question of what constitutes goals of agents in the particular case of migration, shedding light on an additional aspect in Social Production Functions (SPF) theory. The following subsections present these implications, each closing with suggestions for further research.

7.2.1 Migration Theory

The gap that this study addresses concerns explanations of return migration, particularly the migration behavior of highly skilled. Previous studies have focused on economic, social and lifestyle factors in migration, most often lacking

an integrating perspective (Brettell and Hollifield 2000: 2; Massey *et al.* 1994: 700–701). While temporary or circular migration receives increasing academic attention, the decision-making process underlying mobility behavior remains underresearched. Explanations of return reduce it to (a failure of) goal achievement, lack of integration and retirement (Cerese 1974), preference for the home country (Dumont and Spielvogel 2007: 163), a change in cost and benefits or a conscious strategy for further human capital investment (Cassarino 2004: 254; DaVanzo and Morrison 1982: 3). Cassarino (2004: 269) shows that the original motivation for initial migration may differ: settlement, a clearly defined temporary goal, or return as part of the plan including the formation of sustainable transnational networks and transferable human capital. While all of these findings do play a role in migrants' considerations, how they differ in importance for and impact on the migration outcome for individual agents can only be explained by an examination of the underlying decision-making process.

The explorative approach adopted in this study shows which factors agents consciously consider in their locational decisions. It traces how various events, including life phase transitions, start a decision-making process in which relocation is considered. However, whether the participants decided to return depended on their *primary goals* from the three spheres of career, family, lifestyle preferences, as well as their interplay and how this interplay changed over time (life course especially during the time in the host country). In addition, perceptions of *behavioral control*, including facilitating and constraining factors to movement, possess explanatory power. Migration is only one option to achieve primary goals. Studies therefore must not only look at original migration intentions, but at the goals agents set themselves after they have achieved them. A comprehensive explanation for the mobility behavior of migrants therefore needs to examine primary goals and agents' perceptions of where these are better achievable while integrating agents' perceptions of the factors that facilitate or discourage behavior. This perspective can also explain why some agents deviate from their original intention: their priorities and perceptions of where goals are achievable change over the life course and during the stay in the host country (during which real circumstances in host and home country also change, e.g. through China's economic development).

The study did not compare the decision-making processes and primary goals of highly skilled and less-skilled migrants. For the specific group of highly skilled Chinese examined in this study, it can be summarized that career factors remained crucial throughout the migration process, while family and lifestyle preferences also affect decision-making processes to different extents in various life phases. The perception of limited upward mobility in Japan (glass ceiling) influenced the decision-making process in so far as it strengthened the temporary outlook of younger agents, while older agents stressed applicability of skills and the availability of a larger number of suitable jobs in China. Family factors are,

however, of comparable importance in locational decisions, while lifestyle preferences influence where agents feel comfortable, affecting the evaluation of options to reach goals from each sphere.

Time needs to be systematically included in studies on migration behavior, as both external circumstances in host and home country change, but also agents' priorities and perceptions, as well as their assessment of where they can achieve goals. This changes over the life course, but also with time spent in the host country, as agents form location-specific capital and change their perception of benefits and disadvantages to living in host and home country. Agents therefore become more likely to deviate from their original migration intention, a result already reported in the literature, yet the reasons behind the deviation are further explored in this study.

Results of the study suggest that a simple differentiation between settlement migration and temporary or circular migration fails to explain the complex decision-making processes underlying highly skilled migrants' migration behavior. Highly skilled migrants are neither hyper-mobile nor are they necessarily looking to settle; explanations of their mobility need to be rooted in their individual circumstances and perceptions. Future studies could add to the understanding of why agents move or settle by examining the influence of the three spheres in different life phases and points in the migration process by letting migrants of various skill levels (and occupations) weigh their perception of the importance of the different factors in their locational decisions.

7.2.2 Decision-Making Theory

The study adopted conceptualizations of decision-making processes suggested by Naturalistic Decision Making (NDM) scholars. They combine the analysis of stages from noticing the problem to making a choice between generated options to solve it (Lipshitz and Pras 2005: 103). NDM scholars stress ill-structured problems, uncertain dynamic environments, shifting, ill-defined, or competing goals, action/feedback loops, time stress, high stakes, multiple players and organizational goals and norms (Orasanu and Connolly 1993: 7), which are all applicable to the locational decision-making processes of participants, albeit to different degrees.

The study distinguishes between decision-making processes triggered by events that create time pressure in the perception of the decision maker and those that do not. In the absence of time pressure, NDM models need to be adjusted, as NDM scholars do not focus on long-term decision making. In fact, there is a gap in the decision-making literature for how agents arrive at decision they intend to last long term. The study proposes one model to fill this gap (Type A decisions). It redefines the first stage after the trigger as situation analysis, dividing the phase

of situation awareness into situation assessment, which leads to either the phases of problem definition/framing or of settling new goals. This analytical distinction is crucial in locational decisions, as, depending on the trigger to the decision-making process, agents will assess their levels of satisfaction in different life spheres and, potentially already at this stage, include a locational perspective (levels of satisfaction with life *in Japan*). For other triggers, this perspective comes in at either problem definition/framing or in the evaluation of options.

7.2.3 *Social Production Functions theory*

Primary goals are of crucial importance to (long-term) locational decisions. For participants of this study, career and family goals are of central importance, while lifestyle preferences vary in their impact on locational decision-making processes and are usually not focal in agents' explanations, yet they influence migration and settlement intentions. SPF theory examines what constitutes subjective well-being, dividing it into social and physical well-being, which cannot be produced directly, but through the achievement of first-order instrumental goals: stimulation/activation and comfort for physical well-being, status, behavioral confirmation and affection for social well-being (Ormel *et al.* 1999: 67). In an examination of primary goals and how participants seek to achieve them in this study, it becomes clear that, while work serves to produce many of the above-mentioned instrumental goals and family and integration are crucial as well, an aspect of emotional well-being is lacking in SPF theory. Emotional well-being in the study connects to identity, feeling at home, living according to one's religious or political convictions etc. While SPF theory includes the instrumental goals of affection and behavioral confirmation that could be conceptualized to comprise the above-mentioned factors, they seem to be external to the agent: he receives affection from intimate ties, complies with norms etc. However, participants also reported the need to feel integrated, to feel in the right place, to be free to express their identities. This finding ties into criticism of SPF theory for its focus on only two aspects that together constitute subjective well-being, while far more domains of life have been identified (see Bruggen 2011 for an overview).⁶⁰² While the expansion of SPF theory was not central to the study, results suggest that physical, social and emotional well-being contribute to subjective well-being and that agents seek to achieve these goals by moving to a place where they can produce

⁶⁰² As van Bruggen points out, it is especially the aspects of psychological health which in her conceptualization overlaps with emotional well-being, and of spiritual well-being that are left out. However, she argues that psychological health is "exogenous to people's social production functions, and that it may also contribute to overall well-being directly, instead of only *through* social well-being and physical well-being," which is why she does not include this aspect on the same level as social and physical well-being (*italics in the original*, 2001: 96).

stimulation, comfort, status, behavioral confirmation, affection and where they feel they can express their identities (gender, religious, national etc.). Therefore, results of this study suggest that in the context of migration, this conceptualization of subjective well-being must be re-evaluated and emotional well-being included next to physical and social well-being.

7.3 Concluding Remarks

Migration behavior of Chinese highly skilled in Japan is a result of locational decision-making processes, in which the individual migrant's perception of where he can achieve shifting goals is decisive. In order to explain migration behavior, it is necessary to examine shifting priorities and gender differences over the life course, and evolving levels of integration and perception of circumstances in home and host country over the course of migration. While life phase transitions in both family life and educational as well as occupational careers are points in time when migrants consider relocation, an examination of the decision-making process, of migrants' perceptions of problems and goals as well as where they see their goals as achievable based on their evolved perception of circumstances in host and home country in addition to behavioral control, is necessary to explain migration behavior. A single focus on career, family, or lifestyle preferences is insufficient; explanations for international return migration and settlement must integrate the three perspectives.

Agents move in pursuit of a better life, if they have behavioral control and the costs of migration do not outweigh the benefits. Implicit in this understanding of migration is the centrality of subjective well-being. An analysis of goals and priorities of participants in this study showed that career, family and lifestyle preferences together influence migrants' well-being, but also that the spheres are of varying importance over the life course. The following points negatively influenced participants' well-being in Japan: the perception of a glass ceiling hindering upward mobility, a lack of perspectives to meet responsibilities for their families in Japan, and feelings of discrimination in general, to name but a few. As career is central in locational decisions, participants' perceptions of not having equal chances to Japanese in their careers leads to frustration in that life sphere. For young agents, it means that they continue to see their stay in Japan as temporary, for older agents it implies that they seek employment in international companies in Japan or prefer employment in China. Most participants expressed having a strong Chinese identity; feelings of discrimination in everyday life impair well-being, because they feel they cannot express or need to hide parts of their identities. Although most participants feel that Japan is more stable than China, those looking to start a family usually wish to foster a Chinese identity in their children and consider the Chinese education system as superior, which make the

return of agents in the family phase more likely (as does the presence of supportive family networks in China to help with child rearing). Although participants see circumstances in China critically (e.g., political corruption), most assume that they can benefit overall in their careers, family lives and lifestyle preferences.

Implications of this for policy makers and companies aiming at attracting the best brains are that economic incentives such as high salaries and favorable taxation policy or advanced technological level are not enough to retain talent. After expanding their human capital in Japan, Chinese highly skilled migrants base their locational decisions on a broader range of factors. With the development of the Chinese economy, return has become a viable option: it usually increases participants' well-being in the spheres of family and lifestyle preferences and may also be a step forward in their careers. Longer stays in Japan during which highly skilled migrants contribute to Japan's stagnating economy are discouraged by the perception of limited career and social upward mobility of non-Japanese on the one hand, and official rhetoric of immigration policy emphasizing the only temporary welcome of foreigners on the other. This reinforces the feelings of participants that they are not natural members of Japanese society, which is further strengthened by experiences of discrimination in everyday lives. Tackling these issues would constitute a first step towards increasing migrants' well-being in Japan, thereby opening up the possibility of prolonged stays and long-term contributions to Japan's economy and society.

The grounding of locational decisions in the lives and priorities of agents sheds light on aspects as yet neglected by migration research, which focuses on the behavior of agents alone, failing to explain why some agents move and others do not. A holistic approach to decision-making processes of migrants that includes a comprehensive account of their situations and perceptions fills this gap. The study at hand on Chinese highly skilled migrants' decision-making processes concerning relocation from Japan is of theoretical and practical relevance. Its results contribute to theory building in decision-making research and they add to the understanding of the phenomenon of return migration. The model, based on qualitative and quantitative analyses of empirical data, redefines stages in decision-making processes, which is the study's contribution to decision-making theory. Its identification of triggers, influential and decisive factors and the ways in which agents weigh them in locational decisions represent the study's addition to (return) migration research. The findings on priorities and perceptions of benefits and detriments of life in Japan and China (and how they change over the course of migration) can be used to develop supportive policies to attract and retain talent on the one hand, and on the other to improve highly skilled migrants' well-being.

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Appendix

Interview Guide (in English and Japanese)

The same interview guide in slightly altered form was used in Japan and China. Below, the interview guide for participants in Japan can be found, while questions in square brackets written in italics indicate the additional or alternative questions for participants in China. The interview guide for China also differed in that questions referring to participants' experiences in Japan were asked in past tense, and additional questions about return migration were included.

Interview Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews in English Language

INTRODUCTION

Would you mind if I used the recorder?

Your answers will be treated confidentially and only analyzed anonymously, which means that your answers won't be linked to your name or other identifiable information in my dissertation. The interview will take about 40 minutes. Your participation is voluntary – if there is something you do not wish to share, please feel free not to answer. If there is something you cannot express in Japanese [or the interview language upon which the participant agreed beforehand], you can explain it in Chinese or English. We can stop the interview at any point.

First, please let me give you an overview of the main research focus in my dissertation which is centered on the lives of highly skilled Chinese in Japan. In particular, I am studying the reasons for migration to and stays in Japan and am particularly interested in the following aspects:

Your visa, background, your goals and social networks [*in Japan and China, and, particularly, your initial and return migration decision*].

VISA

What type of visa do you currently have [*what was your last visa before returning to China*]? Have you held other visas before this? Is your visa tied to your current employment situation?

Could you please describe the process of entering Japan?

What do you know about Japan's immigration policy?

BACKGROUND AND GOALS

In this next part, I would like to learn more about when and why you came to Japan, what your situation was back in China and how you feel about living in Japan.

DECISION TO COME TO JAPAN/GOALS OF MIGRATION

When did you come to Japan? When did you make this decision? What did you prepare prior to your departure from China? Did you speak Japanese before coming to Japan? Were you also thinking of

moving to other countries before deciding on Japan? Have you been to other countries before moving to Japan? [*Did you live in other countries after your stay in Japan?*]

Why did you want to go abroad?

What was the most important reason for you to choose Japan? Which objective did you want to pursue in Japan? Why did you pick Japan as a destination?

Did you speak to anyone about your decision? To whom?

Did you know anyone in Japan before you came here? Did you approach them before or after arriving in Japan?

How did you anticipate your stay in Japan would affect your professional life?

How do you perceive the state of the Japanese and Chinese economies? In which country would you expect to have better job opportunities?

BACKGROUND IN CHINA

Now, I would now like to know more about your life in China before you came to Japan.

Where did you grow up?

Could you please describe your family background?

How is your relationship with your family now? How often do you get in touch with them and how?

Did your relationship change in any way after you moved to Japan? If yes, how did it change? [*Has it changed again after your return?*]

Are you in touch with friends in China? How often do you communicate?

Did you work/look for a job in China before coming to Japan?

How often do you return to China?

Do you think you have changed since coming to Japan? If yes, how?

How do you feel towards China? How do you feel towards Japan? How do you feel when you go back to China to visit? Do you ever think about returning to China for a longer period of time?

EXPERIENCES IN JAPAN

Now, I would like to learn more about your experiences in Japan.

I would like to get back to your objectives when you came to Japan. Could you please describe your reasons why you came to Japan more in detail?

How did finance your various expenses, the plane ticket, apartment...?

Why did you pick university ___? Did you apply to other universities as well?

[If participant is working] How did you look for a job, how did you obtain your current position? Have you ever switched jobs? Why did you pick this job? Why do you think you were chosen for this position? What kind of company do you work for? How satisfied are you with your job? What is important to you in your working life? Are there other non-Japanese working in your team/your company? Would you like to continue working in this company?

[If no: How long would you like to stay with this company? What kind of job are you seeking next? In which country do you wish to pursue your career?]

[only asked from September 2011] Were you in Japan during the earthquake of 3/11? Could you please describe your experience? How did your friends/co-workers perceive the earthquake?

SOCIAL NETWORKS

How did you find your apartment? What kind of neighborhood is it in, who else lives there?

Do you use Chinese on a regular basis? In which situations do you usually use it?

How comfortable do you feel when communicating in Japanese? Do you use Japanese at your workplace?

Can you please describe your social network in Japan? Do you know any Chinese in Japan? Please describe your relationship with them! How about Japanese? How did you befriend them?

FINAL QUESTIONS

Next, I am also very interested in how your view of living in Japan may have changed over time. To which extent has your view of life in Japan differed over time? Could you please give me some examples about how you perceive life in Japan differently now than when you first came to Japan?

What do you like about living in Japan? What do you dislike? What do you like about living in China? What do you dislike?

Do you think you will move again to another country? How long would you like to stay in Japan? Which aspects play an important role to you in this decision? What is most important in this decision? [if the participant considers relocation] Where would you like to move next? Do you wish to settle in a particular place?

I have two last, more general questions.

What is important to you in life?

When you think back to your decision to come to Japan: How do you feel about it? Would you make this decision again? Do you think it was a good decision to come to Japan?

[I would now like to touch upon your life after you returned to China.

When did you return to China? When did you make this decision? What is the reason you returned? Did you speak to anyone about your decision? What did you prepare prior to your departure from Japan? Where do you live now? How did you find your apartment?

Did you work/look for a job in Japan before returning to China? How did you look for a job, how did you obtain your current position in China? Have you switched jobs since your return? Why did you pick this job? Why do you think you were chosen for this position? What kind of company do you work for? How satisfied are you with your job? Would you like to continue working in this company? How did the stay in Japan influence your career chances in China?

How often do you return to Japan? Do you use Japanese on a regular basis? In which situations do you usually use it? Do you use Japanese at your workplace? Are you in touch with friends in Japan? How often do you communicate?

When you think back to your decision to return to China: How do you feel about it? Would you make this decision again? Do you think it was a good decision to return to China?]

Thank you very much! Were there any questions in this interview that made you feel uncomfortable? May I kindly ask your permission to contact you again after this if I have any further questions? Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

END OF THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews in Japanese Language

イントロ

レコーダー使ってよろしいですか？

この論文での回答は全て匿名とし、分析の際も回答と氏名や個人を特定する情報は開示しません。インタビューの所要時間は約 40 分間です。回答は任意ですので、回答したくない質問があれば、無回答で結構です。もし日本語〔または事前に同意した言語〕で表現できない事があれば、中国語または英語でご回答いただいてもかまいません。インタビューは途中で終了してもかまいません。

最初に私の論文、高度なスキルを持つ日本における中国人に関する研究の要点について説明いたします。私は日本への移住および滞在理由の中でも次の 4 点〔5 点〕について関心を持っています：

- 一 ビザ
- 二 家庭環境・教育背景
- 三 自分の目標、希望など
- 四 ネットワーク

〔五最後に最も重要な点として、日本に来て中国に戻った理由に興味を持っております〕。

ビザ

今はどのようなビザを持っていますか？

〔中国帰国前にどのビザを所持していましたか？〕

過去に他のビザを所持していたことはありますか？

このビザは現在のあなたの雇用形態と合致しますか？

日本への入国プロセスをどう思ったか説明してください！

日本の移民政策についてどのような事を知っていますか？

家庭環境・移住の目標

次に、いつ、どのような理由で来日したのか、中国での生活環境、日本での生活について、聞かせてください。

日本に行く決断、移住の目標

いつ日本に来ましたか？日本へ来る事をいつ決断しましたか？来日前どのような準備をしましたか？来日前、日本語を話せましたか？日本に来る前他の国へ行くことも考慮しましたか？来日前、海外に行ったことはありますか？〔在日後他の国にも在住しましたか？〕

外国に行きたいと思った理由は何ですか？

日本へ来ようと思った一番重大な理由が目的は何ですか？どうして日本を選んだのですか？

誰かとこの決断について相談しましたか？

日本に来る前日本に在住している人を知っていましたか？来日前この人と連絡を取りましたか？

あなたは日本滞在がご自身のキャリアにどのような影響を与えると期待していましたか？

日本/中国の今の経済状況をどう思いますか？ あなたはどちらの国により良いキャリアの機会があると考えますか？

中国の家庭環境

では、来日前の中国での生活について質問したいと思います。

子供のときにどこに住んでいましたか？

家庭環境を説明してください！

いまは、家族との関係はどうか？どのくらいの頻度で、どのような手段で連絡を取りますか？ご両親との関係は来日後変化しましたか？どのように変わりましたか？〔中国に戻った後また変わりましたか？〕

中国に住む友達と連絡を取りますか？どのような頻度で連絡しますか？

来日前中国で就業していましたか・中国でも就職活動をしましたか？

どの頻度で中国に戻りますか？

来日後、自分自身に変化はありましたか？あった場合はどのような変化がありましたか？

中国に対してどのような思いを持っていますか？日本に対しては？中国に戻るときどう感じますか？長期間、中国に帰国したいと考える事はありますか？

日本での体験

では、日本での体験について質問いたします。

もう一度、来日された目的について伺いたいと思います。来日したいと思った理由を詳しく説明してください！

金銭面はどのように工面しましたか？航空券代や住居費等...

なぜ _____ 大学に行きましたか？併願しましたか？

仕事をどのようにして見つけました？就職活動はどうでしたか？転職したことはありますか？なぜこの仕事をしたいと思いましたが？どうしてこの仕事に採用されたと考えますか？どのような会社で働かれていますか？仕事の満足度はどうですか？仕事において何が大切だと思いますか？チームに他の外国人がいますか？この会社に働き続けたいですか？

〔もし続けたくない場合：いつまでその会社で働きたいと思えますか？次は、どのような仕事をしたいと思えますか？どの国にキャリアアップしたいと考えますか？〕

〔2011年11月以降に質問：

東日本大震災の時に日本にいましたか？その時の経験を説明してください！周りの友人や同僚は震災についてどのように思いましたか？〕

ネットワーク

アパートをどうやって探しましたか？近所の環境や、周辺に住んでいる人はどのような感じですか？

普段はどの程度中国語を使っていますか？どんな状況で使いますか？

日本語での会話はどのような感じですか？職場で日本語を使いますか？

日本でのネットワークについて説明してください！日本に住む中国人を知っていますか？どのような関係ですか？日本人の知り合いはいますか？どうやって日本人と友達になりましたか？

最後の質問

最後に、来日後、日本での生活についてどのような見解の変化があったか興味をもっていますので、お聞かせください。日本での生活に関して、最初に来日した時から、時間の経過とともに感じ方で変化した部分があれば、例を挙げて説明してください。

日本に住んでいて、良いと思う面は何ですか？また悪いと思う面は何ですか？中国に住んでいて、良いと思う面は何ですか？また悪いと思う面は何ですか？

将来に他の国に行きたいと思いませんか？いつまで日本に住みたいと思いませんか？この決断には何が重要ですか？一番重要な理由は？〔もし移住したい場合〕次はどの国に移住したいですか？

最後に、2つ基本的な質問があります。

あなたは生活において何が大切だと思いますか？

日本に来る決断について質問します：今はこの決断をどう思いますか？もう一回同じ決断をすかと思いませんか？日本に来た決断は正しかったですか？

〔次に、中国に戻った後の生活について触れたいと思います。〕

いつ中国に戻りましたか？中国に戻るのをいつ頃から決めていましたか？戻った理由は何ですか？誰かにこの決断について相談しましたか？日本の出発前はどのような準備をしましたか？今はどこに住んでいますか？アパートをどのように探しましたか？

中国に帰国前日本で仕事しましたか・日本で就職活動しましたか？現在の中国での仕事をどのように見つけましたか？就職活動はどうでしたか？帰国後、転職しましたか？なぜこの仕事をしたいと思いましたが？どうしてこの仕事に採用されたと考えますか？どのような会社で働かれていますか？仕事の満足度はどうですか？この会社で働き続けたいですか？日本の経験はどのように中国でのキャリアチャンスに影響しますか？

どのような頻度で日本に戻りますか？普段日本語をしゃべりますか？どのような状況で使いますか？仕事で日本語を使いますか？日本に住む友達と連絡を取りますか？中国に戻る決断について質問します：今はこの決断をどう思いますか？もう一回同じ決断をすかと思いませんか？中国に戻った決断は正しかったと思いませんか？〕

このインタビューに参加して、ありがとうございました。インタビューの中で不快に思う質問はありましたか？もし今後、追加で質問がある場合はご連絡差し上げてもよろしいでしょうか？何か質問はありますか？

終

Face Sheet [distributed in Japan]

Name 名前: _____ (Pinyin/Furigana) _____

Nationality 国籍: _____

Email: _____

Age 年齢 10 - 20 - 30 - 40 - 50 - 60 - 70 (代) Gender 性別: male男性 / female女性

Marital status 婚姻区分: single独身 married 既婚 divorced 離婚 widowed 寡婦/夫

Where did you grow up? 子供の時にどこに住みましたか?

Province & City/都道府県/市: _____

Family members (relation) 家族構成 age 年齢 location 所在

1.

2.

3.

Education in home country 母国での最終学歴

a) 中学卒業

b) 高校卒業

c) 短大・専門学校卒業

d) 大学在籍・中退
(大学)

e) 大学卒業

f) 大学院以上

Education abroad 外国での最終学歴

a) 中学卒業

b) 高校卒業

c) 短大・専門学校卒業

d) 大学在籍・中退
(大学)

e) 大学卒業

f) 大学院以上

When did you move to Japan (year)? いつから日本に住んでいますか?

What do/did you study in Japan? 日本でどのような勉強をしていますか/をしましたか?

What is your current job? 日本でどのような仕事/バイトをしますか?

Start of employment いつからですか? _____

Are you a member in any foreigners' or Chinese associations?

外国人/中国人協会のメンバーですか? Yes はい _____ No いいえ

Type of visa ビザ

留学 永住者 教授 技術 芸術 宗教 報道 投資・経営 法律・会計
医療 研究 教育 人文知識・国際業務 企業内転勤 興行 技能 文化活動
短期在 就学 研修 家族滞在 日本人の配偶者 永住者の配偶者 定住者 他 ない

Face Sheet [distributed in China]

Name 名前: _____ (Pinyin/Furigana) _____ Nationality 国籍: _____

Email: _____

Age 年齢 10 - 20 - 30 - 40 - 50 - 60 - 70 (代) Gender 性別: male 男性 / female 女性

Marital status 婚姻区分: single 独身 married 既婚 divorced 離婚 widowed 寡婦/夫

Where did you grow up? 子供の時にどこに住みましたか?

Province & City/都道府県/市: _____

Family members (relation) 家族構成 age 年齢 location 所在

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Education in home country 母国での最終学歴

- | | | | |
|---------|----------|--------------|--------------------|
| a) 中学卒業 | b) 高校卒業 | c) 短大・専門学校卒業 | d) 大学在籍・中退
(大学) |
| e) 大学卒業 | f) 大学院以上 | _____ | _____ |

Education abroad 外国での最終学歴

- | | | | |
|---------|----------|--------------|--------------------|
| a) 中学卒業 | b) 高校卒業 | c) 短大・専門学校卒業 | d) 大学在籍・中退
(大学) |
| e) 大学卒業 | f) 大学院以上 | _____ | _____ |

When did you move to Japan (year)? 何年に来日しましたか?

What did you study in Japan? What was your occupation in Japan?

日本でどのような勉強・仕事をしましたか?

When did you leave Japan? いつまで日本に住みましたか? _____

What is your current job? 今はどのような仕事をしていますか?

_____ Start of employment いつからですか? _____

Were you a member in any foreigners' or Chinese associations during your time in Japan?

外国人/中国人協会のメンバーでしたか? Yes はい _____ No いいえ

Type of visa ヴィザ

留学 永住者 教授 技術 芸術 宗教 報道 投資・経営 法律・会計
医療 研究 教育 人文知識・国際業務 企業内転勤 興行 技能 文化活動
短期在 就学 研修 家族滞在 日本人の配偶者 永住者の配偶者 定住者 他 ない

Network Questionnaire

Social contacts

Do you currently know people you are close to (friends or family?)

今は親しい人がいますか（友達/家族）？

Please use O (yes) and X (no)

O X 書いてください

Yes はい、Number 数

No いいえ

Japan 日本に

China 中国に

JAPAN 日本に

Name 名前	Age 年齢	Gender 性別	Educa- tion 学歴	Relation 関係	Nation- ality 国籍	Known since	Frequen- cy of contact	Dis- tance
		M / F						
		M / F						
		M / F						
		M / F						
		M / F						
		M / F						

CHINA 中国に

Name 名前	Age 年齢	Gender 性別	Educa- tion 学歴	Relation 関係	Nation- ality 国籍	Known since	Frequen- cy of contact	Dis- tance
		M / F						
		M / F						
		M / F						
		M / F						
		M / F						
		M / F						

Do you know any... ...知っていますか？

in China
中国に住む人

in Japan
日本に住む人

College graduates

Entrepreneurs

People illegally employed

Low-skilled workers

Seniors/Juniors

大学卒業

起業家

不法労働者

単純労働者

先輩 後輩

Do you know people you would ask for help in these situations when you are in JAPAN/CHINA?⁶⁰³
 日本で/中国で次の状況下で助けを求めることができる人はいますか？

If no, please write X. If yes, please use: いないと、X書いてください。いると
 (F=友達 friend K=家族 family WC=同僚 work colleague J=日本人 C=中国人 H=他)
使ってください！

	Yes (relationship - nationality) いる (関係・国籍)	No 人はいない	I don't have this problem そういう問題ない
moving 引越し	_____		
advice アドバイス	_____		
looking for a job 就職	_____		
repairing things in the household 家回りの修理	_____		
discuss personal matters プライベートについて話す	_____		
you've had a bad day 苦難な状況下で励ましてくれる人	_____		
problems with Japanese language* 日本語の問題*	_____		
problems with Japanese culture* 日本の文化*	_____		
legal problems [in Japan]* [日本の]*法律との問題	_____		
homesick* ホームシック*	_____		
lovesick 恋の悩み	_____		
sick and cannot buy food yourself 病気の時の食事	_____		
apartment-sitting 不在時のアパート管理	_____		
problems of any kind (talk to) 問題があった時に相談できる	_____		
something good has happened 喜びを分かち合える	_____		
same hobbies 共通の趣味を持っている人	_____		
stay with for 2 weeks 滞在場所が必要だったら	_____		
give you 100,000 Yen*/10,000 Yuan 十万円*/一万元借り	_____		
go to parties with パーティーに行く	_____		
go to the movies with 映画館に行く	_____		
spend your leisure time with 自由時間を共に過ごす	_____		

⁶⁰³ Participants interviewed in Japan received this part of the questionnaire only relating to their lives in Japan, while participants interviewed in China received two pages. Questionnaires differed in five questions. The additional or altered questions for participants in Japan are marked with an asterisk.

List of Participants

Interviews were numbered consecutively. Of 122 participants interviewed for this study, this list depicts the 112 participants included. Interview language: C=Chinese, E=English, J=Japanese.

interview number	month of interview	interview language	nationality	gender	occupation	year entered Japan	years in Japan	entering visa	region of origin in China	age
1	2011/01	J	Chinese	female	trade	2003	10	ryūgaku	East	26-30
2	2011/01	J & E	Chinese	female	business student	2008	4	ryūgaku	Northeast	26-30
3	2011/01	E & C	Chinese	female	soc. science student	2010	3	ryūgaku	Beijing	26-30
5	2011/02	J	Chinese	male	travel	1992	21	ryūgaku	Northeast	36-40
7	2011/02	J	Chinese	male	IT	2005	6	ryūgaku	West	31-35
8	2011/02	J	Chinese	female	law student	2006	7	ryūgaku	East	26-30
9	2011/02	J	Chinese	female	law student	2005	8	ryūgaku	Northeast	26-30
10	2011/02	J	Chinese	female	law student	2007	6	ryūgaku	Shanghai	20-25
11	2011/02	J	Chinese	male	research	1987	26	ryūgaku	Central	41-45
12	2011/02	J	Chinese	female	business student	2007	6	ryūgaku	Northeast	26-30
13	2011/02	J	Chinese	female	consulting	1989	24	kenshū	Beijing	46-50
14	2011/02	J	Chinese	female	soc. science student	2008	5	ryūgaku	Central	26-30
15	2011/02	J, E & C	Chinese	male	IT	2008	5	gijutsu	Central	26-30
16	2011/02	J	Chinese	female	engineering student	2005	8	ryūgaku	Northeast	26-30

interview number	month of interview	interview language	nationality	gender	occupation	year entered Japan	years in Japan	entering visa	region of origin in China	age
17	2011/02	J	Chinese	female	finance	2002	11	ryūgaku	Northeast	31-35
18	2011/02	J	Chinese	female	engineering student	2008	5	ryūgaku	East	26-30
19	2011/02	J	Chinese	male	law student	2000	12	ryūgaku	Central	31-35
20	2011/02	J	Chinese	female	business student	2000	13	Nihonjin no haigūsha	East	20-25
21	2011/03	J	Chinese	female	research	2002	11	ryūgaku	Autonomous Region	31-35
22	2011/03	J	Chinese	male	IT	2004	9	gijutsu	Central	36-40
23	2011/03	J	Chinese	female	IT student	2003	10	ryūgaku	East	31-35
24	2011/03	J	Chinese	male	cultural exchange	1993	20	ryūgaku	East	41-45
25	2011/03	E & C	Chinese	female	consulting	2000	13	ryūgaku	Central	26-30
26	2011/03	J	Chinese	female	soc. science student	2003	10	ryūgaku	Northeast	26-30
27	2011/03	J	Chinese	female	business student	2008	5	ryūgaku	East	20-25
28	2011/03	J & E	Chinese	female	finance	2001	12	teijūsha	Shanghai	26-30
29	2011/03	J, E & C	Chinese	male	IT	1999	14	ryūgaku	Northeast	36-40
31	2011/03	J	naturalized Japanese	female	education	1990	23	ryūgaku	Beijing	46-50
33	2011/09	E	Chinese	male	finance	1994	19	ryūgaku	East	41-45

interview number	month of interview	interview language	nationality	gender	occupation	year entered Japan	years in Japan	entering visa	region of origin in China	age
34	2011/09	J	Chinese	male	finance	1988	25	intra-firm transferee	East	41-45
36	2011/09	J	Chinese	female	finance	2000	13	ryūgaku	Shanghai	26-30
37	2011/09	J	Chinese	female	research	1991	22	ryūgaku	Beijing	46-50
38	2011/09	J	Chinese	female	business student	2009	4	ryūgaku	Northeast	20-25
40	2011/09	J	Chinese	male	trade	2001	12	ryūgaku	Shanghai	31-35
41	2011/10	J	Chinese	female	business student	2010	3	ryūgaku	Beijing	20-25
42	2011/10	J & E	Chinese	male	engineering student	2008	5	ryūgaku	East	20-25
43	2011/10	J	Chinese	female	sales	2003	9	ryūgaku	Shanghai	31-35
44	2011/10	E	Chinese	female	soc. science student	2008	4	ryūgaku	Northeast	31-35
45	2011/10	J	Chinese	female	sales	2008	3	ryūgaku	Northeast	26-30
46	2011/10	J, E & C	Chinese	female	business student	2001	11	teijūsha	Beijing	20-25
47	2011/10	E	Chinese	male	trade	2010	1	intra-firm transferee	East	31-35
48	2011/10	E	Chinese	male	business student	2007	6	gjūtsu	Autonomous Region	26-30
49	2011/10	E	Chinese	female	business student	2011	2	ryūgaku	East	26-30
50	2011/10	J	Chinese	male	business student	2009	4	ryūgaku	Shanghai	26-30

interview number	month of interview	interview language	nationality	gender	occupation	year entered Japan	years in Japan	entering visa	region of origin in China	age
51	2011/10	J	Chinese	male	business student	2005	8	shūgaku	East	26-30
52	2011/10	J	Chinese	female	education	1990	23	ryūgaku	East	46-50
53	2011/11	J	Chinese	male	finance	1989	24	ryūgaku	Shanghai	51-55
54	2011/11	E & C	Chinese	male	business student	2007	6	ryūgaku	East	26-30
55	2011/11	E	Chinese	male	research	2007	6	ryūgaku	Central	26-30
56	2011/11	J	Chinese	female	business student	2008	5	ryūgaku	Northeast	26-30
57	2011/11	J	Chinese	male	research	1996	17	shūgaku	Northeast	31-35
58	2011/11	E	naturalized U.S.-American	female	research	1988	19	ryūgaku	Beijing	51-55
59	2011/11	J	Chinese	female	trade	2004	9	kazoku taizai	Northeast	41-45
60	2011/11	J	Chinese	male	finance	1993	20	ryūgaku	East	41-45
61	2011/11	J	Chinese	female	business student	2010	3	ryūgaku	Central	26-30
62	2011/11	J & E	Chinese	male	soc. science student	2009	4	teijūsha	Shanghai	20-25
63	2011/11	J	Chinese	male	IT student	2011	2	ryūgaku	West	20-25
64	2011/11	J	Chinese	female	soc. science student	2004	9	ryūgaku	East	31-35
65	2011/11	J	Chinese	male	soc. science student	2008	5	ryūgaku	Northeast	26-30

interview number	month of interview	interview language	nationality	gender	occupation	year entered Japan	years in Japan	entering visa	region of origin in China	age
66	2011/11	J & E	Chinese	male	engineering student	2008	5	ryūgaku	Shanghai	20-25
67	2011/11	E	Chinese	male	finance	2004	9	ryūgaku	East	31-35
68	2011/11	J	Chinese	male	IT	1996	17	ryūgaku	Northeast	41-45
69	2011/11	J & C	naturalized Japanese	female	engineering student	1995	18	teijūsha	East	20-25
70	2011/11	J	Chinese	male	IT student	2008	5	teijūsha	Northeast	20-25
71	2011/11	J	Chinese	female	soc. science student	2008	5	ryūgaku	East	26-30
72	2011/11	J	Chinese	male	sales	2004	9	ryūgaku	Northeast	31-35
73	2011/11	J	Chinese	female	soc. science student	2006	7	ryūgaku	East	26-30
74	2011/11	J	Chinese	female	travel	1994	19	working visa	Northeast	36-40
75	2011/11	E	naturalized Japanese	female	IT	1992	20	eijūsha no haigūsha	Beijing	46-50
76	2012/02	J	Chinese	male	IT	2000	7	ryūgaku	East	31-35
77	2012/02	J	naturalized Japanese	male	finance	1991	15	gijutsu	Central	41-45
78	2012/02	E	Chinese	male	law	1992	7	ryūgaku	West	36-40
79	2012/02	J	Chinese	male	trade	1993	10	ryūgaku	West	46-50
80	2012/02	J	Chinese	male	finance	2006	4	ryūgaku	East	31-35

interview number	month of interview	interview language	nationality	gender	occupation	year entered Japan	years in Japan	entering visa	region of origin in China	age
81	2012/02	J	Chinese	female	research	1996	6	ryūgaku	East	41-45
82	2012/02	J & E	Chinese	female	research	1996	8	kazoku taizai	East	41-45
83	2012/02	J	Chinese	male	finance	1991	13	ryūgaku	Beijing	46-50
84	2012/02	J & C	Chinese	male	soc. science student	2010	1	ryūgaku	Central	26-30
85	2012/02	J	Chinese	male	sales	1992	10	shūgaku	Shanghai	41-45
86	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	finance	2002	9	ryūgaku	Shanghai	26-30
87	2012/03	E	Chinese	female	finance	1993	5	kazoku taizai	Shanghai	31-35
88	2012/03	J & C	Chinese	male	finance	1988	20	gijutsu	Beijing	51-55
89	2012/03	E	Chinese	male	finance	1997	2	ryūgaku	Central	36-40
90	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	finance	1997	13	ryūgaku	Northeast	36-40
91	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	engineering	1993	12	ryūgaku	Shanghai	41-45
92	2012/03	J	Chinese	female	trade	2008	2	ryūgaku	East	26-30
93	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	maker	1988	10	shūgaku	Shanghai	46-50
94	2012/03	E	Chinese	male	IT student	2008	2	ryūgaku	East	31-35
96	2012/03	J, E & C	Chinese	female	business student	2007	4	ryūgaku	West	20-25
98	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	education	1988	10	shūgaku	Shanghai	41-45

interview number	month of interview	interview language	nationality	gender	occupation	year entered Japan	years in Japan	entering visa	region of origin in China	age
100	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	research	1985	6	ryūgaku	Shanghai	60-65
101	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	finance	1998	12	ryūgaku	West	36-40
102	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	IT	2003	8	ryūgaku	East	26-30
103	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	finance	2001	7	ryūgaku	East	36-40
104	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	finance	1998	11	ryūgaku	Northeast	31-35
105	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	IT	2007	3	gjutsu	West	26-30
106	2012/03	J & C	Chinese	male	finance	2000	6	ryūgaku	East	36-40
107	2012/03	E	Chinese	female	soc. science student	2010	1	kenkyū	Central	26-30
108	2012/03	J	Chinese	female	IT	1992	19	ryūgaku	Beijing	46-50
109	2012/03	E & C	Chinese	female	soc. science student	2010	1	ryūgaku	Central	20-25
110	2012/03	J	Chinese	female	finance	2008	4	ryūgaku	Northeast	26-30
111	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	finance	2006	4	ryūgaku	Northeast	26-30
112	2012/03	J	naturalized Japanese	male	finance	1988	19	ryūgaku	Central	46-50
113	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	finance	2002	5	ryūgaku	Beijing	26-30
114	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	engineering	2000	7	ryūgaku	Northeast	41-45
115	2012/03	E	Chinese	male	IT	2008	3	ryūgaku	East	26-30
116	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	finance	2000	5	ryūgaku	Shanghai	36-40

interview number	month of interview	interview language	nationality	gender	occupation	year entered Japan	years in Japan	entering visa	region of origin in China	age
118	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	finance	1995	9	ryūgaku	Northeast	46-50
119	2012/03	J	Chinese	female	maker	1997	10	ryūgaku	Northeast	41-45
120	2012/03	J	Chinese	female	maker	1989	18	kenshū	Northeast	46-50
121	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	maker	1996	2	gijutsu	East	46-50
122	2012/03	J	Chinese	male	medicine	1991	6	ryūgaku	Northeast	51-55

compiled by the author.