Exploring the Identities of Students at Western Branch-campuses in Malaysia and United Arab Emirates

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are rapidly growing economies with diverse ethnic and linguistic populations. In both, the need for skilled labour has increased the importance of higher education for national development goals. Lacking the capacity to provide public higher education for all their citizens both countries have recruited foreign institutions to educate those who do not have access to public higher education. This thesis examines the experiences of students at Australian and British international branch-campuses (IBCs) in the UAE and Malaysia in order to understand the influence that enrolment at an IBC has on students’ identities. Synthesizing the American and European literature on identity and higher education, this thesis conceptualizes identity as the fluctuating social categories that distinguish groups or individuals from one another. The data for this study was collected during five months of fieldwork, employing qualitative interviews with 49 students and 13 administrators/instructors. The majority of student-participants in this study were affiliated with economically powerful, yet politically marginalized minority groups. The findings suggest that Western IBCs promote a new set of identities that differ from those prioritized in the political and social contexts of the UAE and Malaysia. Students perceive that micro-divisions related to ethnicity decrease at an IBC, but new divisions emerge based on ability, language or region. These findings reflect a changing relationship between higher education and identity in the 21st Century. Cross-border higher education is not embedded in a national or local context, nor promotes identities related to those contexts. Instead, students’ identities become linked to their achievements, and thus branch-campuses support students as they forge market-relevant identities. In contexts such as Malaysia and the UAE, this role is significant as IBCs provide peripheral ethnic groups with an alternative pathway to enter the economic sector which is increasingly detached from its political context.
Acknowledgments

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my beloved supervisor Dr. Ruth Hayhoe. Thank you Ruth! In one of our first after-class conversations you shared your story of faith with me, providing me with a new outlook on life and learning. Your example in academia, in your family and in friendships is inspiring. I have loved learning from you and am very thankful for the many opportunities you have given me.

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Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

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### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>ACIS</td>
<td>African-Caribbean International Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td>Barisan Nasional (Malaysia’s Ruling Party)</td>
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<td>CBHE</td>
<td>Cross Border Higher Education</td>
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<td>CBSE</td>
<td>Central Board of Secondary Education</td>
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<td>CHC</td>
<td>Confucian-heritage Cultures</td>
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<td>CII</td>
<td>Comparative Identity Inventory</td>
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<td>CIS</td>
<td>Chinese Independent Schools</td>
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<td>CTI</td>
<td>Communicative Theory of Identity</td>
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<td>DAP</td>
<td>Democratic Action Party</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>IBC</td>
<td>International Branch-campus</td>
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<td>MCA</td>
<td>Malaysian Chinese Association</td>
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<td>MMDI</td>
<td>Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAS</td>
<td>Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKR</td>
<td>People’s Justice Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Pakatan Rakyat (Malaysia’s Opposition Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESL</td>
<td>Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNHEI</td>
<td>Transnational Higher Education Institutes</td>
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<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
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<td>UTAR</td>
<td>University of Tun Abdul Razak</td>
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Dedication

In memory of Robert “Uncle Bob” Covert
1947-2011

Sau Bay, Fiji Islands
Preface

I think that I am more confident. Because I used to – in school, during my high school – I am very shy and never used to talk much. After I joined university then I am more confident. Because I had to do a lot of presentations and things like that. So I am more open, more confident. And skills... Critical thinking skills. Because the Malaysian schools they hardly have this critical thinking. - Jeelyn (Malaysia)

I’ve become a feminist. I was never that before... Because I never actually thought of it as a big thing. I don’t know – I never gave it much thought. I never felt held back before just because of being a girl. And now I can actually feel it. Maybe it’s because I’m more exposed to it. I guess because I’m coming of age. I’m more exposed to the fact that I’m a girl holding me back. So it has actually made me stand up for myself as well.

- Chira (UAE):

Students change at university. This thesis examines how university students, living and learning at the centre of cross-border higher education, experience identity change during university. The student-participants who volunteered for this study were enrolled at Australian and British international branch-campuses (IBCs) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia. In both countries, students came from two main groups: a) economically powerful but politically marginalized minority groups or b) recently mobile students from the geographic region. All were keenly aware of their multiple identities and how external structures and their own agency interacted to shape these.

My own interest in this research area began while working in the post-secondary sector in the Fiji Islands (2007-2008). In that small but vibrant country the university had become a site for political battles over identity. The Fijian population is divided almost exactly in half between indigenous Fijians and Indian immigrants, the latter brought over by the British in the late 19th Century as indentured servants. As a result of strict land-ownership laws, the indigenous Fijians own most of the land. The Indians, however, have prospered financially in much of the business sector. It is within this tense context that successive, pro-Fijian political leaders have made university tuition free for the indigenous
population at the largest university. In reaction, influential Indian leaders from the business community established their own university where Indian students can study at a subsidized rate. Students’ ethnic identities have become a central feature determining their ease of participation at each university. Observing these events I became keenly aware of how the university can institutionalize and perpetuate identity.

The purpose of this study is to examine these sorts of processes more fully and on a larger scale. The UAE and Malaysia, like the Fiji Islands, are countries with large populations of economically strong, though politically marginalized ethnic groups. As these countries attempt to become higher education hubs they draw local students from within these powerful groups as well as mobile students from the region, educating both in a political and social context which provides explicit narratives constructing their identities. Through this research I attempt to understand both the structural or institutional crafting of identity and the personal experiences and responses of the students influenced by these structures. In the following pages, students’ political and social contexts, personal stories and unique experiences of identity change at university are presented, re-constructed and interpreted through the lens of my research endeavours.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Research Problem

Globalization has increased the complexity of identity issues. The widespread mobility of individuals and institutions, layered with diverse colonial histories and economic systems, has led to new forms of identity that are both imposed on and adopted by groups and individuals. All countries are home to multiple communities. The boundaries between diverse groups are continually changing as each interacts with the other, the state and their broader global networks. National governments respond to this complexity in distinct ways, broadening or narrowing their notion of citizenship to include or exclude particular groups and constructing narratives of belonging to bind the accepted groups together.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia are two countries that have increasingly diverse populations and each government has responded differently to this diversity. Recurring public debate grapples with who among the many groups should have citizenship and the rights it provides. Education is at the centre of identity debates in both countries. There is little consensus over which resident groups may attend public institutions. In particular, universities have become contested sites as the need for skilled labour increases their importance to national development goals. The UAE and Malaysia have drawn different lines of inclusion yet ultimately neither country can provide public higher education for all its citizens, let alone all its residents. To address this shortage both countries have recruited foreign institutions to educate those who do not have access to public higher education. These foreign universities, mainly from Western countries, have arrived eager to make a profit in the growing economies and increase their institutions’ international reputation. Often, their institutional rationales acknowledge little of the complex identity context into which they have entered. They enroll a collective of students from various ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds who, throughout their young lives, have been categorized along these lines and educated accordingly. Many of these students have economic assets but little political agency. They find themselves traversing the formative years between adolescence and adulthood studying in Western programs in diverse, Islamic nations. Their experiences should pique our interest.
Research Questions

Several decades of higher education research suggest a myriad of ways identity is altered at Western universities, yet much of this research examines and is written within wealthy, Anglophone countries. Although thoughtful studies have drawn attention to the experiences of diverse or minority students within these contexts, there is little identity research analysing students’ experiences within cross-border higher education. Since the number of international branch-campuses (IBCs) is steadily increasing around the world, it is time to explore the identities of diverse students in Islamic nations where the complexity of political, social and individual identities converge in higher education. Accordingly, this thesis asks the following question and subquestions:

How do students enrolled in Western-run IBCs in diverse, non-Western nations perceive the university as supporting or challenging their identities?

a. What identities do students value or find influential?

b. Do students feel these identities are supported or challenged by their IBC experiences?

c. Does students’ time at an IBC foster new, salient identities?

Background: International Branch-campuses

The movement of higher education programs across borders has increased rapidly in the past decade. The number of international branch-campuses rose from 24 to 249 between 2002 and 2015, with the presence of foreign university programs in every continent and sub-region world-wide (C-BERT, 2015; Knight, 2011). For many of the governments that are importing IBCs, the strategy is predominantly related to economic development goals and to meeting a growing demand for higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2011; Lane, 2011; Knight & Morshidi, 2011). Higher education is seen as a valuable service industry and a means of drawing the world’s talent. It is also seen as a way of sparking economic innovation and supporting the labour market. For the foreign providers who establish IBCs in emerging economies, many view these countries as lucrative markets for program delivery in which students will pay well for their degrees (Healey, 2008; Karram, 2013; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). But this economic-transaction approach to cross-border higher education contributes little to our understanding of how students are influenced by their experiences in these institutions. When an institution is reproduced in a new local context and charged with contributing to the national economy and educating the workforce, complex social interactions occur. Currently, the majority of IBCs are imported from
Western countries into non-Western locations. Students from a variety of backgrounds interact with each another while receiving Western, often Anglophone, curriculum and being instructed by Western and non-Western faculty. These students encounter new categories of identity institutionalized within the academic and social structures of the IBC. Chapter Two of this thesis establishes the need for a deeper understanding of these students’ experiences and identity construction at Western branch-campuses in non-Western host nations.

Identity: A Working Definition

The ideational concept identity is frequently decried for its ambiguity. This much debated phenomenon has brought together distant communities both physically and virtually, highlighting the similarities but also the deep diversity that exists among peoples of the world. Decades of scholarship on global identities have anticipated an interconnected world in which national identities are subsumed by civilizational identities which then fuel global conflict (Bussett, O’Neill & Cox, 2000; Huntington, 1993; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Sacks, 2002). Yet there is a new level of global interconnectedness in the 21st Century that renders these analyses simplistic. The boundaries between identities are not so easily demarcated by geographic and historic constructs like nations or civilizations.

In the literature exploring students’ experience in higher education, theories of identity development have long been considered foundational to understanding the impact of university on young adults in their formative years. Higher education scholars have defined identity in different ways from a deterministic, personal journey (Chickering, 1969) to politically constructed categories (Sigalas, 2010; Wilson, 2011; Von Mol, 2013). Much of the American literature on identity emerges out of Social-Psychology and takes the former approach while much of the European literature examines identity through the lens of Political Science. This thesis is informed by the work of recent scholars in both America and Europe who call for holistic inquiry into multiple categories of identity, fusing these disparate approaches and offering a lens through which to examine complex identities amid globalization (Abes & Jones, 2004; Bauman, 1999; Breakwell, 2004; Jones & Abes, 2013). In Chapter Three I offer a synthesis of the relevant literature on identity and higher education, presenting the following definition: identity is the fluctuating social categories, made tangible through the construction of formal and informal boundaries that distinguish groups or individuals from one another.
Overview of the Research

From January to May 2014, I visited the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia in order to answer the above research questions. Both countries are non-Western, higher education hubs with diverse student populations, making them ideal sites in which to explore the relationship between cross border higher education and identity. In each country I toured public and private institutions of higher learning, meeting students, professors, administrators and government officials to learn about their higher education sector.

After this contextual, background research, I invited students from four international branch-campuses (IBCs) to participate in in-depth interviews about their experiences. My invitation was answered by 49 students in the two locations. The data from these interviews was analyzed using a three step coding process borrowed from Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006). Chapter Four provides a detailed overview of the data collection and analysis methods used in this dissertation.

Context

The histories of the UAE and Malaysia, as presented in Chapter Five, confirm the importance of identity to national discourse in both countries. Although multiple communities coexist in each, there are significant limits to political participation for certain groups. When international branch-campuses enter the country, many students from these peripheral communities enrol. The IBCs are used by these groups to by-pass their political limitations and access the flourishing business sectors. Branch-campuses also draw mobile students, often from the surrounding region, who move to Malaysia or the UAE to pursue their degree. Many view the degrees offered by the IBC as more prestigious than those offered in their home country.

Findings

The data collected from the student interviews were constructed into five leading themes using the coding techniques of Grounded Theory. These themes include: IBCs as identity-free, new identities, academic divisions, social divisions and invisible identities (See Chapter Six). The research findings suggest that Western IBCs promote a new set of identities that differ from those prioritized in the political and social contexts of the UAE and Malaysia. Students perceive that the micro-divisions related to ethnicity decrease at a branch campus when compared with their previous experiences in lower
levels of education. However, new divisions based on ability, language or region begin to divide students within the IBC. Successful students develop the skills and connections to situate themselves in the surrounding business world, but new academic and social divisions emerge that place limits on students who do not develop the required skills. At the same time students are actively aware of their deeper familial and cultural identities and strive, through friendships and giving back to their families, to stay rooted in these as they pursue their Western degree.

These findings illuminate the changing relationship between higher education and identity in the 21st Century (See Chapter Seven). Cross-border modes of higher education such as the IBC are no longer embedded in a national or local context, and no longer promote identities related to those contexts (Neave, 2001). Instead, the identities students develop at IBCs are rooted in their achievements (Bauman, 1999), enabling them to be English speaking business leaders. Thus, IBCs become the means through which students forge market-relevant identities. In contexts such as the UAE and Malaysia, this role is significant as IBCs provide peripheral ethnic groups with an alternative pathway to enter the economic sector which is increasingly detached from its political context. However, the new achievement-based identities are only available to successful students, while others remain limited by ability or family restraints.

Contributions to the Field of Higher Education

This thesis makes several important contributions to the field of Higher Education. There is currently little scholarship that considers the implications of cross-border higher education on students’ affective development. This study opens a new branch of research exploring the identity configurations of students in new global modalities of cross-border higher education. As Chapter Two argues, the university as an institution has been linked to national identity formation since the emergence of the Western nation-state (Neave, 2001). This thesis provides a deeper understanding of how the university influences identities amid globalization, as diverse nation-states host diverse populations and institutions.

Furthermore, this thesis borrows from the European literature on student mobility to inform current theories on student development in the field of Higher Education. Chapter three argues that multiple categories of identity should be studied simultaneously to understand how the nature of diverse students’ identities alters between contexts. The result is a broad framework within which one
can analyse political, social and personal identities, and consider how these are altered by institutional authorities and informal social communities.

This thesis also provides an original analytic tool with which to approach this new research area. Chapter Three presents the Comparative Identities Inventory (CII) developed from a synthesis of the literature and tested on the data from this thesis. The CII is helpful for comparing the nature of multiple identities and their relationship to institutional authorities across diverse contexts. As an analytic tool the CII offers a clear picture of how identity categories fluctuate in an era of globalization. Chapter Seven uses the CII to compare how students’ identities in the UAE and Malaysia are altered at university. Finally, as Chapter Eight concludes, the findings from this thesis illuminate several new lines of inquiry about the relationships between higher education and identity in an era of globalization.

Conclusion

An international branch-campus is a space apart from, and yet located within, its local context. In the UAE and Malaysia IBCs enroll students that have been repeatedly categorized within national identity politics. Their time at the IBC rattles these categories and repositions students to enter the business sector with all its global ties and trends. At the same time, students continue to value their family and ethnic identities. This fascinating journey through the Western branch-campus brings students new understandings of who they are, who they have been and who they hope to be.
Chapter 2

University Students’ Identities at International Branch-campuses: A Review of the Literature

The concomitant of the rise of the Nation-State in Europe was the incorporation of the university into the coordinating ambit of the state, both as a symbol and as a repository of national identity, as an instrument for the preservation of the nation’s culture and through the unification of the culture as a manifestation of a country’s claim to a place amongst the nations – the cultural equivalent of today’s more restricted concern with economic competitiveness... (Neave, 2001, p.7)

Introduction

Central to higher education’s influence on society is its ability to shape how people view themselves and their surrounding communities. From the rise of European nationalism in the 18th Century (Neave, 2001) to the self-discovering narratives of American undergraduates in the 20th Century (Astin, 1973; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans et al., 2009), scholarship in the West has confirmed that universities play a key role in helping individuals and communities construct, articulate and sometimes challenge complex identities. However, the past few decades have seen a new manifestation of the Western university as governments of emerging economies import its programs to educate their work force. In Malaysia and the UAE the imported institutions are often attended by students from diverse minority groups that are at the centre of national identity debates. There are currently few studies exploring how these students’ identities are shaped by attending Western universities in these contexts.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the need for new research on how students' identities are shaped as a result of their involvement in higher education in this globalized context, specifically Western branch-campuses in diverse, Islamic nations. To this end, this chapter reviews several bodies of scholarly literature related to the main research question of this thesis:

How do students enrolled in Western-run IBCs in diverse, non-Western nations perceive the university as supporting or challenging their identities?
Chapter Overview

The first section of this chapter argues that Western universities have always influenced identity and the nature of that influence has altered based on socio-political context. The second section describes the global rise of cross-border higher education and how this has led to new contexts in which to examine higher education and identity. The third section reviews several studies on student mobility, from European and Anglophone nations, that inspired this thesis. The final section of this chapter examines the concepts Western and non-Western and argues for an exploratory study on how students’ identities are influenced when they enrol in Western institutions in politically complex nations.

Section One: The University and Identity: Historical Contexts

The modern European university, an institution that has been imported and adapted around the world, has always influenced identity. The nature of this influence has reflected the University’s evolving relationship with the political and social authorities in the context in which it exists. Under the Holy Roman Empire the first universities housed collectives of scholars who were mobile across vast tracts of land with little affiliation to a particular geographical space. With the fractioning of Europe into nation-states, increasing numbers of universities were established, closely linked to the state and providing training for civil servants. In both these distinct eras the university, as a key social institution, played a significant role in articulating, maintaining and/or re-inventing identity. Guy Neave (2001), in his historical analysis of European universities, outlines the importance of Europe’s early universities in fostering universal spiritual knowledge that transcended geography and held together the Holy Roman Empire:

Such uniformity stood as the very real expression of a universalism that both pervaded and went beyond the territorial community, that bound together faith and learning, the Church universal with the university as the universal path to higher knowledge irrespective of the individual’s birth place, (Neave, 2001, p. 16).

According to Neave, the university in pre-nation-state Europe was a key institution in fusing together the diverse communities of Europe under one collective identity. As nation-states became the new political authorities in Europe, one of the first things new rulers did was establish universities. This was one method of asserting their legitimacy: “Indeed one of the formal tests of a newly-claimed sovereignty was the right by the local rulers to found universities,” (Neave, 2001, p. 17).
Neave argues that as universities grew in number they were intricately linked with the new nations’ quest for collective identity, upholding and reinforcing the narratives of national belonging that would bind people together. Universities offered:

... uniform dissemination of those values through education to give new commonality amongst the peoples occupying a particular historic space...Collective awareness expressed itself through a shared consciousness of history, literature, language, science and their institutions if not always loyalty to the person of the ruler, that is national identity, (p. 22).

In the past three decades, globalization has led to new modalities of the European university as it is imported to new locations. Although globalization has been widely debated, many scholars agree that the late 20th Century saw new forms of global interconnectedness emerge as a result of advances in information, communication, finance and travel technologies (Held & McGrew, 1999). With globalization have come two simultaneous pressures which have sparked the new cross-border modalities of higher education such as branch-campuses. First, the overwhelming demand for higher education in emerging economies like the UAE and Malaysia has led their governments to recruit foreign institutions. Second, the growing pressure for higher education institutions to internationalize their operations in order to remain relevant and necessary in the global knowledge economy has made Western institutions eager to fill said demand (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Guruz, 2008; Marginson, 2002; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005).

Neave’s contention that the university has long been a conduit for identity formation raises questions about how universities are currently shaping identity in an era of globalization with the continual growth in cross-border higher education. Do the branch-campuses in the UAE and Malaysia foster a transnational identity of scholars, contribute in some way to a national identity or, more likely, reshape identity along new lines related to the socio-political context of their students?

Section Two: Internationalization, Cross-border Higher Education and International Branch-campuses

Numerous studies have explored the global aspect of higher education under the term internationalization, defined by Knight as integrating “an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education,” (Knight, 2004, 11). In a similar vein, the actual global movement of students and programs across borders is often bundled together in
policy and academic spheres as *transnational or cross-border higher education* (CBHE). Knight (2011) has suggested three generations of international or transnational university activities: the movement of students, the movement of programs, and more recently the establishment of higher education hubs in which governments intentionally recruit both foreign providers and foreign students to develop a higher education cluster within their region. This thesis is concerned with students’ experience of the latter two generations, program and provider mobility in education hubs.

Cross-border higher education is of some interest to supranational organizations such as UNESCO and the WTO that attempt to regulate educational transactions across borders to ensure quality. UNESCO defines cross-border higher education as “... higher education that takes place in situations where the teacher, student, programme, institution / provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders” (2005). Numerous scholars have embarked on research about the challenges and potentials of regulating CBHE, ensuring quality and accountability (Chapman & Pyvis, 2013; Knight, 2007; Madden, 2012; Peim & Martin, 2011; Stella, 2006). Further research exists exploring harmonization (Hoosen, et al., 2009; Reinalda & Kulesza-Mietkowski, 2005), student destination and program choice (Hoyt & Howell, 2011; Wilkins & Huismans, 2012), institutional partnerships (Chapman & Sakamoto, 2010; Chapman, Pekol, & Wilson, 2015), stakeholder rationales for embarking on cross-border education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Lee, 2014).

There is also a small but growing interest in the effects of CBHE on host countries. In 2014, the British Council commissioned a large, comparative study on the impacts of transnational education (TNE) on 10 host countries including: Botswana, China, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, the UAE and Vietnam. This study does not specifically look at IBCs but does consider how TNE impacts host countries more broadly. The study used online surveys with students and phone interviews with in-country experts (government, institutional administrators) to understand TNE’s impact on the economic, academic and socio-cultural dimensions of the country. Relevant to this thesis are the socio-cultural findings from student respondents which suggest students benefit from their participation in TNE by increased intercultural competency, increased English language proficiency and exposure to new forms of educational instruction, such as those that encourage analytic thinking.

**International Branch-campuses**

This thesis is concerned with one form of CBHE, the international branch-campus (IBC). Although smaller in number than other internationalization ventures (joint programs, twinning, franchising), IBCs
continue to be established around the world. Traditionally, IBCs have mainly been exported from Western, Anglophone countries to those considered less developed. However this trend is changing as more institutions from non-Western nations cross borders and new partnerships are formed around the world (Chapman & Sakamoto, 2010).

There is significant variation between IBCs in the size of their campuses, the number of students, the background and qualifications of faculty, and the programs and extra-curricular offerings. Thus, deciding what actually defines an IBC can be difficult. Most scholars agree however that the first feature of an IBC is its campus, the actual ‘bricks and mortar’ that establish its physical presence in the host country. Wilkins and Balakrishnan (2013) go further, suggesting that,

Two features distinguish branch campuses from other forms of transnational education that also adopt a physical ‘bricks and mortar’ approach: first a branch-campus operates under the same name as its parent institution, and second, the qualifications that the students gain bear the name of the parent institution, (p.1).

This definition aligns with the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE), which defines a branch campus as an overseas institution of higher education that fits the following conditions:

The unit should be operated by the institution or through a joint venture in which the institution is a partner.... in the name of the foreign institution

Upon successful completion of the course program, which is fully taken at the unit abroad, students are awarded a degree from the foreign institution, (OBHE, 2009 as quoted in Healey, 2014, p.22)

Lane (2011) also contributes to defining an IBC by stating it “must have a physical presence on foreign soil; the students at the IBC must be able to earn a degree from the home campus, and... it [is] fully or jointly owned by the institution from which the degree is awarded,” (p.369). He also argues that “...regardless of whether a home campus is considered public or private, the IBC operates in the private sector of the host country,” (p.369).

Current Scholarship on International Branch-campuses

International branch-campuses (IBCs) are relatively new and are seen by some as solely commercially-driven enterprises that rise or fall in response to global markets (Altbach, 2010, in Wilkins, et al., 2011).
Hence, much of the current literature related to IBCs examines their viability and position in their host location. Although this differs from the focus of this thesis on students’ identities, these studies do offer insight into the role of IBCs in their host country, and warrant mentioning below.

First, Shams and Huisman (2012) take up the question of how IBCs might be managed effectively in their article relating transnational higher education institutes (TNHEIs) to the business literature on strategic management. Drawing on an extensive review of the literature, these authors point to, (a) curriculum and staffing, (b) cultural-societal distance, and (c) regulatory distance, as the main three spheres of difficulty for IBCs. They suggest that the overarching challenge in managing an IBC is the constant pull between standardization with the home institution and adaptation to the local context. They use the dichotomy of global integration and local responsiveness, as understood in international relations theory, to illustrate this dilemma for IBCs. They conclude that all IBCs must take both areas into consideration but can never fully satisfy both.

In a complementary study, Lane (2011) explores where IBCs fit in the business literature on private higher education and analyses the policy environments that shape them when they are imported into a new context. Lane draws on extensive document analysis, campus visits and interviews with stakeholders in Malaysia and Dubai, addressing the two contexts also considered in this thesis. He relates Levy’s (2008) categories of private higher education to IBCs in these nations. These categories include superior, different and increased education products. He suggests that IBCs use their nation of origin as a significant marker of prestige, in contrast to just their own institutional prestige. For example, they market their degrees as “British” or “American.” Furthermore, they provide education for groups that have had little access to post-secondary education within their country and they provide new forms of curriculum and pedagogy that are not always available at local public or private institutions.

**Student Experience**

Several studies examine students’ perspectives, questioning why students choose to study at IBCs (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011; Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2011). Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman argue that, “the product offered abroad rarely comes close to the home [university], in terms of breadth of curriculum, quality of academic staff, physical environment, learning resources, and social facilities,” (414) raising questions of why students would choose to study at IBCs instead of other available options. To answer this, they surveyed 320 students at six international branch-campus in the United Arab
Emirates. Their study highlights many of the features of IBCs including the large expatriate population within their student body, their market-driven origins, and their presence in emerging economies. Their findings indicate that students choose to study at IBCs in the UAE because the UAE is safe, close to family, less expensive than traveling abroad and offers a culture/lifestyle that they find familiar. Particularly for students from less stable Muslim countries – such as Pakistan – the UAE was considered an ideal place to study. The authors model these findings as pull factors, attracting students to the IBC in contrast to the push factors such as lack of higher education institutions at home.

Although Wilkins, et al. (2011) premise their study above by critiquing the quality of IBCs and their commercially-driven operations, a subsequent study by the same authors (Wilkins, et al., 2012) suggests that while IBCs may be lesser versions of the home institutions, students express satisfaction with their university experience at IBCs. In a similar vein to the above study, the authors surveyed 247 students at six IBCs in the UAE to determine their level of satisfaction with and their perceptions of the quality of their IBC education. More than half of the respondents expressed satisfaction with their program, indicating that they would choose the same institution again. They felt they were receiving good value for their money and would recommend their institution to a friend. Students also affirmed the quality of their IBC education as it was represented through lecturers and learning systems. At the same time, the authors suggest that students often need to adjust to the essay-based, student-centred learning approach which differs from their high school experience. Overall, however, the majority of students were satisfied with their IBC education and felt it to be of adequate quality.

**Crossing Cultures**

Though much of the research on IBCs examines factors related to management or quality, there are hints within the studies above of the cultural shifts that both students and faculty make as they interact in these new spaces. This is telling in light of Neave’s argument above that suggests universities have historically contributed to much more than educating a labour force. Several studies take up the theme of culture in more depth, examining the cultural diversity that exists between faculty and students at IBCs in East Asia and the Gulf. The research of Lemke-Westcott and Johnson (2013) considers cultural differences as they influence the learning styles of students and teachers at IBCs in Qatar. Their study used two learning style inventories (Kolb’s and Vermunt’s) to assess students and instructors at the IBCs and determine the extent to which their learning styles were different. They found that in many cases first year students held completely opposite learning styles to their instructors, several elements of which were rooted in their unique cultural traits. Complementary studies of IBCs in Qatar have found
similar results (Prowse, 2014; Prowse & Goddard, 2010) and indicate that instructors begin to adapt their teaching to their students’ learning style despite institutional messages claiming IBCs offer a mirror curriculum to the home country.

The theme of instructors’ experiences crossing cultures has also been taken up by Dobos (2011) in her research on faculty at Australian IBCs in Malaysia and Singapore. The study used in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 faculty members at international branch-campuses to understand their experiences in inter-cultural education settings. She highlights four main themes within faculty’s experiences including: professional development and community, communication, quality assurance, curriculum issues. Particularly of interest is her finding that non-Australian faculty have difficulty switching their teaching style from faculty-oriented to student-oriented to meet the expectations of the Australian program. Furthermore, faculty have some ambivalence toward the exclusive use of English, which they perceive as limiting when it is not the first language for the instructor.

Students’ Identities
The above studies provide a select review of research on CBHE and IBCs. Most salient for this thesis are several studies below that focus their inquiry on students’ identities within the context of IBCs and CBHE more broadly. The work of Chapman and Pyvis (2005, 2006a, 2006b; Pyvis & Chapman, 2004, 2005) took up the theme of students’ identities in CBHE as early as 2004. Their multiple studies on Australian “offshore” programs in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia represent some of the earliest work exploring students’ experiences and identity in CBHE. Their 2005 work on the experiences of graduate students in joint-degree programs in Hong Kong and Singapore employed Wenger’s (1998) five dimensions of identity to analyse working-professional students’, "sense of themselves as students in relation to the social communities to which they belong,” (p. 40). Their study used qualitative surveys to gather data from 47 students and they conducted in-depth follow-up interviews with 12. Many of their findings relate to students’ overall experiences with curriculum and program choice, but the study does provide insight into the student-identities of working professionals in off-shore programs. Two broad categories of students emerged: those who prioritize family over work and study (primarily women); and those who prioritize work over family and study.

In 2006, Chapman & Pyvis (2006a) expanded their research to consider students in Malaysia as well as the above. The Malaysian student participants were from a range of pre-university, undergraduate and graduate programs at an Australian IBC. The authors make three main arguments
from their findings. First, students enroll in offshore programs as part of their personal identity journey to be an “international person,” a label associated with quality and status. Second, “students seek identity as members of the educational community through pursuing local ways of belonging,” (ibid. p. 239). Sense of belonging, however, proves particularly challenging due to their distance from the home campus. The third argument, related to the findings above, is that students balance competing demands of family, work and study. However, there is a distinction in the author’s findings between the experiences of working-professional students (Hong Kong and Singapore) and the Malaysian students, many of whom had only recently moved to the country. These students were living without their families and were pursuing their studies full-time without full-time work. While the professional students compartmentalized their various spheres (work, family, study) in order to manage each one effectively, the full-time students in Malaysia simply balanced school and social obligations.

In a complementary study, Willis’ (2004) used mixed methods to survey and interview students at an IBC in Hong Kong to understand how strongly they held to so-called traditional, Chinese values. He found students held dual identities, considering themselves independent and creative while still respecting and owning traditional Chinese values such as respect for elders and concern for the collective community. Students indicated they wanted Chinese values considered in the American curriculum they were encountering.

Finally, in her masters’ thesis on students in Singapore, Corbeil (2006) interviewed one government official and 12 students involved in CBHE programs in Singapore. Her purpose was to understand to what extent CBHE participation contributed to cross-cultural understanding, intercultural learning and dialogue across cultures. She found that students from across South and East Asia were developing a broader sense of Asian Identity as a result of their time at branch campuses in Singapore. Furthermore, students did not feel they were being homogenized into Western forms of living, knowing or interacting, but rather asserted their own agency in taking their Western education and integrating it with their previous knowledge.

The above studies assist this thesis in four ways. First they confirm that issues of identity are important to students who study at IBCs and indeed should be the subject of scholarly inquiry. Second, they offer an example of a comparative study of diverse programs in three regions contributing to a broader picture of the students across East Asia who participate in CBHE. Third, they highlight the different ways part-time and full-time students embrace their student identity, suggesting that the identities of full-time students may be more influenced by their studies since they have fewer external
demands to manage. Fourth, they affirm the need to understand how students experience CBHE and also the need to include the student voice in scholarship.

At the same time, these studies consider little of the political and social context in which students live. The national host contexts of IBCs have significant public discourse on identity and belonging. Yet this larger context is examined minimally in most studies. The aim of this thesis is to explore students’ identity change at IBCs as a process that is intricately linked to the political and social context of the host countries. To that end, Chapter Five provides a detailed examination of identity debates and higher education in both Malaysia and the UAE.

Identity in Context
Three studies that do locate students’ identity change within the broader socio-political context are contributed by Sidhu and Christie (2014), Vora (2013) and Telafici, Martinez and Telafici (2014). Sidhu and Christie (2014) provide a particularly rich exploration of Monash University’s branch-campus in Bandar Sunway Malaysia. They employ Lefebvre’s (1991) framework on the social production of space to illustrate how four major forces worked together to bring together the Sunway corporation and Monash University as players in global higher education. The four forces include, “the economic development strategies of the Malaysian state... the entrepreneurial activities of the Sunway conglomerate...the internationalisation imperatives of Monash University’s parent campus in response to the Australian government’s higher education policies; and the operation/existence of a student market,” (p. 182). They use a case study methodology to explore the establishment and outcomes of the Monash-Sunway partnership. This study is deeply aware of and rooted in the socio-cultural and historical processes that shaped the Malaysian nation-state and its higher education policies. They ask:

Who benefits from MUM (Monash University Malaysia) and who is excluded from spaces like MUM? And can the campus foster the cosmopolitan and post-racial imaginaries and solidarities that it gestures toward despite its location in a place where ethnic politics affects every aspect of social and economic life including access to education? (p. 183).

Although their primary purpose is not to investigate notions of identity, the final data collection for their case study – interviews with students – reveals that students seek university certificates that make them mobile and allow them access to transnational employment. In answer to their question quoted above, students perceive that the IBC is a “freer” space than other institutions of higher education. The authors conclude that this international education venture did more than just increase access. It also
acted to decrease ethnic unrest among Chinese-Malaysians and offer a new business venture for the local stakeholders.

In the UAE, Vora’s (2013) ethnography of South Asian diaspora communities also takes account of the broader socio-political context before embarking on an in depth description of multiple identity negotiations. In her fifth chapter, “Becoming Indian in Dubai: Parochialisms and Globalisms in Privatised Higher Education,” Vora explores the experiences of South Asian students at the American University of Sharjah (AUS). She suggests that,

The university experience was one of dissonance and rupture between the parochialized forms of education that South Asian youth went through in primary and secondary school and the multi-cultural and supposedly egalitarian platform of the Western university, where they received liberal, neoliberal and “global” forms of citizenship training. (p. 147)

She considers the South Asian diaspora to be “in-between” subjects, having, “understandings of identity that were both oriented toward South Asia and firmly rooted in Dubai,” (p.149). Their time in university shows them their place among all the nationalities of Dubai and sharpens their awareness of both their precariousness in the region and their position as global citizens. At the same time, Dubai’s diaspora communities, much like the Chinese in Malaysia, have retained incredibly strong cultural ties and modes of living linked to South Asia. Vora’s students saw this as a distinction from their peers and relatives in America or the UK who had become very “Western.” She notes that in primary and secondary school, “most children are segregated into national groups and taught national languages and histories. Students develop identities that are based primarily on their parents’ country of origin,” (p. 163). In contrast she concludes that “American-style universities provide training for neoliberal forms of global citizenship, in which “calculative individuals learn skills to succeed in the market,” (p.163).

A final study on IBCs that considers the broader political and social context of the host country is a reflective paper co-written by Telafici, Martinez, and Telafici (2014) in a narrative style. They ask big picture questions, describing the opposing values, and ensuing tensions, of for-profit market-oriented education, Western liberal arts education and traditional Gulf society. These authors analyse their experiences as instructors at IBCs in Qatar, concluding that Western instructors should, “become familiar with the host culture’s nation, mores, and nuances... [so] we can then better position ourselves to be culturally sensitive and culturally respectful.” For these authors, their end goal in students’ non-
academic development is to foster identities that are authentic to students’ Gulf life, values and traditions. As Michael Telafici writes:

This is no less a place for the well-rounded individual than the United States, and I consider our instruction to be no less valuable in Qatar if we undertake it in a nondogmatic and respectful manner, cognizant that the debates, thoughts, and opinions we help students to arrive at and express may not be what we as Westerners or Americans would arrive at ourselves, (p.188).

This thesis joins with the above studies in asking how students’ identities change during their time at an IBC and examining this in light of the broader socio-political context of the host country. Where this thesis goes further is in its consideration of multiple institutions that have been exported to two distinct countries, in two distinct regions. This multi-site, comparative study offers a broader vantage point to explore what other studies have merely glimpsed.

Section Three: Identity and Higher Education: Foundational Research

The above literature contributes to an understanding of students’ identity formation as cross-border higher education (CBHE) takes Western institutions to non-Western locations. Yet these studies are a tiny minority in research on higher education and identity. In contrast, the majority of research on higher education and identity examines university students in Europe and Anglophone countries. Currently, this Western research only intersects with scholarship on CBHE in its exploration of student and scholar mobility, what Knight terms the first generation of international activities (2011). Student mobility has received, by far, the most attention from CBHE scholars. This is perhaps not surprising since academic exchanges and research collaboration have been mainstays of the Western university for centuries. And while this thesis is concerned with program and provider mobility to non-Western locations, it is closely related, often theoretically linked, to the bulk of literature on higher education and identity in the West. Therefore, the next section reviews the foundational, Western literature on identity and higher education, its origin and evolution, as well as its foray into research on student mobility.

Roman and Saxon Models

Neave’s historical analogue referenced at the beginning of this chapter offers a strong rationale for studying the relationship between universities and identity. It also offers a framework for
understanding the distinct research spheres that currently exist in Western scholarship on this topic. Two ideal types are presented in his argument: the Roman Model and the Saxon Model. The Roman Model refers to the European university characterized by a close relationship between the university and the state. In contrast, the Saxon model, existing in England and subsequent Anglophone nations, describes universities that were extensions of local communities, both supported by, and benefiting the towns and cities in which they were located. Academic freedom and autonomy from the government were defining features of this latter model. The Saxon model has become the main form in English speaking nations worldwide. In America, the flagship context for this model, many top universities retain their independence from the government, being governed instead by autonomous boards of trustees. A similar analysis, distinguishing between university models on both sides of the Atlantic, is offered in Burton Clark’s Continental and Anglo-Saxon models (Clark, 1983).

Much of the research that currently exists on the relationship between the university and identity reflects this Roman/Saxon division. In the United States, with its roots in the historical English university model, the research tends to centre on the experiences and alterations of individuals. Theories are grounded in Social Psychology and findings are mainly applicable at a program level. Identity is researched as a personal journey toward wholeness or the way in which one sees oneself in contrast to an often homogenous local community.

In contrast, the Western European research on identity borrows from Political Science to determine how collective consciousness alters in its loyalty to the European Union as a new governing authority in the European Economic Community. In line with Neave’s work, the European research is reflective of the relationship between tertiary education and the state in many European nations. Most studies explore the identity as a collective trait of large-scale populations and how national or regional identity is altered through study abroad experiences. The following section examines the European context and provides an overview of the literature on the university and national or regional identity.

European Students and Identity

In the European context, the main body of literature exploring the relationship between the university and identity formation relates to the Erasmus exchange program and offers insight into how collective identity is influenced by student mobility. The Erasmus exchange program of the European Union began in 1987 and over the next two decades saw more than 2 million students study outside their home nation (Commission of the European Union, 2008). This exchange program is the most systematic and
widely administered of its kind. Although there are strong economic rationales driving the program in
terms of developing a mobile workforce, an explicit founding goal of Erasmus is to promote interaction
between, “citizens in different Member States with a view to consolidating the concept of a People’s
Europe,” (Council of Ministers, 1987, 2). The aim is to use higher education as a vehicle to bring together
Europe’s younger generations, to foster a European Identity and provide the legitimacy necessary to
further the economic and political policies of the union (Beetham & Lord, 1998; Bellamy & Castiglione,
2003; Bruter, 2005; Habermas, 2001; Sigalas, 2010).

Several scholarly studies have tested the impact of student exchanges on fostering a European
Identity amongst participants. Studies examine whether a European Identity exists amongst the
“Erasmus generation”(Figel, 2007; Wilson, 2011); how this identity is linked to higher education and the
extent to which student mobility and its subsequent interactions have an influence on identity
construction (Sigalas, 2010; Wilson, 2011; Von Mol, 2013).

Not all studies on the European identity of Erasmus students consider the influence of higher
education in forming these identities. Rather, some studies merely use Erasmus students as a ready
sample of young people with travel experience abroad to investigate European identity generally
(Fernandez, 2005; Cinnirella, 1997). Among the studies that do test Erasmus as a vehicle for European
identity, there is little consensus on the impact of student mobility on identity formation. Sigalas (2010)
suggests population change as a result of mobility is a widespread assumption driving policy. Indeed, the
importance of youth exchanges on European identity was pressed by Rubio and Wallace (Sigalas, 2010),
but little empirical research exists to establish causality between travel and identity formation.
Challenging this assumption, Sigalas (2010) conducted pre and post-travel surveys with Erasmus
students and found little evidence that European identity and perceptions of Europe changed during
students’ time abroad. Wilson (2011) also challenged the perception that participation in the Erasmus
program makes students more pro-European. Wilson’s study found that students who went abroad
were already more pro-European and did not change significantly from their peers who remained at
home. Kuhn (2012) built on Sigalas’ work, arguing that higher education in itself, rather than mobility,
fosters a European Identity and those with more education will not change during exchanges as much as
those with less education.

In contrast, Fligstein (2008) established that there is potential for a European Identity to develop
during exchange and this European identity is held by students in tandem with their national and local
identities. Von Mol (2013) directly critiques the work of Sigalas and Wilson, challenging their methods
and the sample in their identity research which only considered British students. Consequently, Von Mol conducted a mixed-methods, comparative study of students from several European nations and found that a sense of European Identity is strongly linked to students’ national origin. Students from Norway, for example, were significantly less likely to articulate a European Identity than their counterparts in Italy. Although diverse in their findings about the influence of Erasmus, these studies are unified in the belief that European Identity is a construct that exists in certain settings and is worth studying.

*Identity Barometers*

Another important area of research on collective identities has been undertaken by the institutional think-tanks, or barometers, that measure regional identity. Beginning in Europe in 1973, the European Commission has used the Eurobarometer as a venue to disseminate public opinion research on the European Union (EU). The Eurobarometer uses data from 1000 phone interviews conducted twice a year. These surveys explore how citizens from different European nations feel about their economy, their nation’s participation in the EU, the perceived unifying factors in the EU and the present challenges facing the EU. In past decades, select studies have used the Eurobarometer’s data to explain how diverse European identities are influenced by European expansion, economic uncertainty and cultural interaction (Citrin & Sides, 2004; Carey, 2002; Risse, 2004; Delhey, 2007).


At present, only the Eurobarometer has been used repeatedly to establish a baseline for research into higher education and identity change as the result of mobility (Von Mol, 2013). Both
barometers, however, support the hypothesis that collective identities are linked to support for political systems. A more complete discussion of how collective identities can be conceptualized and investigated is found in Chapter Three, but it should be noted that the European branch of identity research as it relates to higher education is largely concerned with the development of mass identities and group loyalty.

Summary
The European literature on collective, regional and national identities varies in its findings. More recent studies suggest that there is no guarantee that students will develop new, regional identities through participation in inter-cultural exchange programs. Rather, a student’s country of origin tends to be the more important factor determining how loyal or connected they feel to the European Union. This literature strongly reflects the socio-political context of Europe and its ongoing experiment with regionalism. In contrast to this line of scholarly inquiry is the study of college student identity in the American context. The next section overviews the American research, explaining why it in turn focuses on an individual, psycho-social notion of identity formation with a growing emphasis on diversity.

College Student Development: Anglo-American Contexts
In the Anglo-American context, scholarship on College Student Development is the main body of literature exploring students’ identities and higher education. Much of the research in this extensive and growing field understands identity as a developmental process for students. At its inception, scholars in this field drew on the work of psychologist Erik Erikson (1968) and cognitive-structuralist Jean Piaget (1969) to develop models of how students’ identity develops throughout college. Perhaps most often cited is Arthur Chickering’s book Education and Identity (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) which informed subsequent decades of research. Chickering views students’ identity development as occurring along several vectors or fluctuating stages. Establishing a cohesive identity is the fourth and central vector, acting as a centrifugal force influencing the remaining vectors. Another frequently cited framework was developed by Marcia (1966) from a cognitive-structuralist position. Here, students’ journeys to identity achievement are defined by a series of crises or decision-making events, forcing students to make a choice of commitment to certain values and identities.
Numerous scholars have used the theories of Chickering and Marcia to assess where individual students are positioned in relation to the vectors or stages and how this affects academic achievement or career choice (Adams, Shea, & Fitch 1979; Lounsbury, Huffstetler, Leong, & Gibson, 2005; Foubert, Nixon, Sisson, & Barnes, 2005; Waterman & Waterman, 1972). Studies also point to the importance of student services such as counselling, orientation and first year networks to assist in students’ identity development (Aitken, 1982; Zubernis, Snyder, & McCoy, 2011).

In contrast to this somewhat deterministic understanding of identity, the present thesis aligns with more recent scholarship that views identity as fluctuating and socially constructed with multiple elements. The studies considered in the following review have a complementary epistemology. They have been selected to illustrate the scope and findings of the Anglo-American literature on college student identity, and highlight the starting point for this study with its focus on diverse students in cross-border higher education. To that end, the studies below examine identity formation of diverse students, international students and those who participate in study abroad programming.

 Minority Students on Western Campuses

Never before, however, have understandings of identity development been challenged in the ways required by the increasingly diverse characteristics of present student populations, (Jones, 1995, p.6).

The majority of studies in the American context that examine university students’ multiple and intersecting identities investigate a sample of students who differ in some way from the majority of their peers. Although women now outnumber men in many post-secondary institutions, they were a distinct minority at the time when scholars began to examine their identity. Women were one of the first groups on campus to advocate for new understandings of identity that accounted for their particular experiences. Several other minority groups have been the focus of research over the past few decades with the bulk of literature examining race (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Torres & Magolda, 2004), gender (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Settles, 2006), sexuality (Jones & Abes, 2004; Renn, 2007), social class and the intersections between these identities.
International Students on Western Campuses

Over the past 30 years the number of international students on Western campuses has increased significantly and numerous studies have investigated identity change for this population. International, foreign or mobile students are often demarcated by three factors: their recent move to a new country primarily for education; their movement on their own, without family; and their payment of high tuition fees (Carroll & Ryan, 2007). These students have distinct challenges in their academic, social and psychological adjustment to university in a new context.

Particularly relevant for this thesis is Pham and Saltmarsh’s (2013) narrative inquiry of Vietnamese students at Australian universities. The authors conducted extensive interviews with six students exploring how their “networks of social relations impacted their construction and reproduction of their identities as individuals and as members of society,” (133). Students described their growth in areas of independence and academics, but felt an overall isolation from their peers in the host country. Furthermore, in their interactions with professors they lacked mentorship and were socially detached. The authors suggest that instructors need to broaden their awareness of students’ diverse experiences and develop a curriculum that promotes self-knowledge, openness and citizenship. Aligning with the current thesis, this study views identity as “...always situational and contradictory because of the fragmented individual identities within the self which, at the same time, are reliant on different social groups within which people are placed,” (p. 131).

Likewise, Gomes & Alzougool (2013) conducted interviews with 30 international students studying in Australia to understand their multiple identities and how they balance or negotiate past and present identities. They found that students’ home identities take on more permanence as students interact with social and entertainment media that connects them to home. At the same time they strongly identify as international students, feeling separated from their university peers.

Also aligning with the current study, Gargano (2012) used the methodology of Portraiture to illustrate the experiences of two female international students at a university in the USA. The participants were both born in India, moved to the Middle East as infants with their families and then travelled to the USA for their undergraduate degrees. Gargano points to their multiple places of residence and critiques studies that use only nationality as the dividing factor between student groups. Gargano asks how students, seeking to make meaning of their experience, exist in transnational spaces and position themselves within the geographic and social divisions they encounter. She highlights the
stark differences between the two students’ modes of negotiating and embracing different identities. While one student saw herself as a “global nomad,” the other held strongly to her “international student” identity. The article concludes that research on international students must account for increasing heterogeneity of experience.

Recently a study by Malcolm & Mendoza (2014) examined the experiences and multiple identities of seven Afro-Caribbean International Students (ACIS) at a large American research university. They looked at how these students interact with “institutional discourses” at their institution and found that institutions often overgeneralize or marginalize ACIS’s diverse identities. Students described their experiences of being forced into other categories of identification that were more common on campus, such as African-American or Latino despite the fact that their own positions of identity were strongly demarcated by their accents and use of language. The study suggests that ACIS students have multiple layers of identity related to their position as international students along with their connection to their region and nation. These students were adept at switching between identities and adapting in different contexts.

In 2008, Haugh explored how the identities of diverse international students at an Australian campus, “are discursively constructed in research interviews,” (p. 2). He argues that a truly postmodern, fluid and constructed understanding of identity requires that the discourse surrounding identities be examined to understand how identities gain substance through conversation. Using the communicative theory of identity (CTI), Haugh conducted multiple focus groups with 21 international students studying in Australia. The students were a diverse group, originally from Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, Russia and Chile. This study found that students construct identity by the “marking of reference to ethnicity or nationality, (2) marking of the ‘other’ through pronouns and the like, and (3) alluding to intertextual relationships with broader, institutional (primarily media) discourses on international student identities,” (p. 7). Again, this study confirms that international students hold many identities, the boundaries of which are continually changing based on interactions with those around them.

Another study that bears mentioning is Hsieh’s (2006) investigation of female Chinese international students on American campuses. Hsieh draws on past literature to make the case that Asian international students have more challenges in their English language ability than other international students. They also have the largest cultural differences from their American colleagues. Thus, they have the potential for more difficult experiences on American campuses than other
international student groups. Hsieh conducted interviews with seven female Chinese international students at an American university using narrative inquiry methods. She found that students were pulled between their chosen identities and those that were prescribed for them by the university. At the same time, students were not merely passive objects, accepting the prescribed identities, but active subjects negotiating their identities. However, Hsieh also argues that these students faced significant pressures from the dominant assumption that American culture and the English language are superior to their own. This assumption limited what elements of themselves students felt comfortable contributing to their university community.

Research like Hsieh’s accepts a distinct cultural divide between Western and Asian modes of social and academic interaction. She is not alone in basing her exploration of students’ challenges on this assumption, as many studies begin with the premise that international students are entering contexts that are fundamentally different from those of their home. However, an alternative approach is presented in Ryan & Louie’s (2007) study on Asian students enrolled at Australian universities. These authors critique the essentialist approach that labels students as “Western” or “Asian” learners. They deconstruct studies that assume all students from Confucian-Heritage-Cultures (CHC) operate in a certain way. They suggest that these studies overgeneralize CHC students, painting them as either passive, independent, rote learners or high achieving STEM students who intrinsically value education. In contrast, they aim to consider the diversity of all students drawing on the work of Kostogriz (2005), who “advocates the construction of a ‘thirdspace’—a ‘critical pedagogy of space’—that takes into account ‘both the multiple and contested nature of learning’ and provides for ‘intercultural innovations in meaning- and identity- making,’” (Kostogriz, 2005, as quoted in Ryan & Louie, 2007).

Doherty & Singh (2007), in their chapter on “Disrupting Western teachers’ assumptions about the Asian learner,” also tackle the stereotypes that limit international students from Asia when they enter Western, TESL classrooms. Their study of Asian students at Australian universities found these students engaged with the stereotypical Asian learner identity in different ways, at times embracing it and at other times asserting their difference from it. They argue that globalization has changed the nature of identity and students now hold fluid identities that are constructed and re-constructed through their global movement.
Study Abroad Students

A related area of literature examines the identities of students who participate in study abroad programs. Originally conceived to provide study terms in Europe for wealthy American students, study abroad programs now send Western and non-Western students to every region of the world. Programs range in length from one week to a year, and differ in delivery from individual to group endeavours. While most studies on study abroad students have explored language acquisition (Engle & Engle, 2004; Freed, 1995) or inter-cultural sensitivity (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Williams, 2005), a small group of studies have examined how study abroad impacts Anglo students’ processes of identity construction.

Kinginger (2013) provides the most comprehensive review of research on language, study abroad and identity. She begins by presenting Block’s (2007a) two critiques: a) study abroad is too short to spark identity change in students and b) study abroad literature is limited in its focus on Americans learning languages abroad. Block and others (Ogden, 2007; Patron, 2007; Shively, 2011) confirm that while students might learn the language there is no guarantee they are valuing the culture around them and indeed may be developing a greater sense of their home nation’s superiority as they react to the unfamiliarity of their new context. Kinginger also reviews studies that examine how students’ specific identities in such categories as gender (Kinginger, 2008; Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Masuda, 2011; Polanyi, 1995; Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Twombly, 1995), foreigner (Brown, 2013; Iino, 2006; Siegal, 1996), ethnicity (Anya, 2011; Talburt & Stewart, 1999), age (Iwasaki, 2013; Kinginger, 2008; Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005; Perrefort, 2008; Spenader, 2011; Wilkinson, 1998) and linguistic heritage (Petrucci, 2007; Riegelhaupt & Carrasco, 2000) are impacted and impact language learning while studying abroad. Kinginger’s main finding was that students often interpret their linguistic and cultural interactions through these identity lenses leading to different levels of conflict depending on where these identities position them. Kinginger concludes that students need more support as they head abroad and can “benefit from explicit instruction on the pragmatic aspects of language and the relationship between these aspects and the presentation of self,” (353).

Outside the centrality of language learning, other scholars have examined how study abroad impacts particular identities for students. In 2004, Dolby studied American students from a MidWestern university who traveled to Australia for one semester (four months). She conducted pre and post-interviews with 22 students in order to understand how their self-perceptions changed during study
abroad. Dolby was particularly concerned with students’ national identities, attempting to understand if students were moving toward a post-national construction of identity which other scholars have suggested would result from globalization. However, Dolby found that while students encountered a new understanding of “America” and “Americanness,” this appeared to strengthen their sense of national identity. She suggests studying abroad changes students’ national identities from passive to active as they encounter new constructions of their home country outside of its borders.

Teranishi’s (2007) research on study abroad and identity explored 11 students traveling to Mexico for summer service learning. These students were all American citizens but identified as Latino/a. Using journal analysis, the author found that their summer program in Mexico strengthened both their American and Latino/a identities as they realized more clearly where they fit within each community.

**Summary**

Several conclusions can be drawn from the above findings. First, diverse students on mainly homogenous campuses often feel divided between the identity categories that are imposed on them from the outside and their own sense of self. The formal and informal groupings created to describe students often construct identity in a way that does not represent who students perceive themselves to be. Students go through a process of negotiation to make meaning of their experiences and to understand their multiple identities. Providing students with intentional spaces on campus in which to discuss these issues of identity is a necessary support structure.

Second, the findings from research on international students confirm Gargano’s argument that diverse students make meaning of their identities in very different ways. Some hold strong identities as international students while others hold strongly to their regional or national identities. Most importantly, these multiple ways of constructing identity often occur simultaneously. Regional, national, and linguistic identities are felt and navigated by students at the same time and students are adept at maintaining their local and transnational ties.

Finally, in study abroad contexts students encounter new identities and new understandings of old identities. Like the research on European students, students’ national origin has implications for how their identity-perceptions change during study abroad.
The above literature supports the rationale of this thesis by confirming the importance of identity-construction processes for the students in cross-border higher education. However, these studies predominantly examine homogenous groups of mobile students who move to Western campuses and differ from their local peers. In contrast, the present thesis opens a new area of scholarship by exploring the influence on students' identities when the Western campus is imported into a diverse, non-Western nation.

Section Four: Western Education Abroad

A main assumption of this study is that differences – symbolic, if not actual - exist between Western and non-Western locations. Thus, when IBCs from Western contexts are established in non-Western contexts, they bring a distinct form of higher education into a space with its own particular ways of knowing and being. This phenomenon warrants analysis.

That there are substantive distinctions between Western and non-Western regions - peoples, religions, languages, ways of knowing and being - is certainly not accepted by all scholars. Scholars such as Ryan and Louie (2007) – mentioned above – argue that these labels mask the extremely heterogeneous experiences of diverse students and lead to assumptions that all students from a particular location think, learn or act in a particular way. They make a strong case for avoiding these generalizations or labels when interacting with students in the classroom. Their argument is less relevant, however, when higher education research broadens beyond the individual experiences of students to consider systems and collective populations. Indeed, when exploring multiple students studying at Western institutions that have been imported to new contexts, the notion of “the West” - specifically the Western origins of the university - becomes very relevant for two main reasons.

First, as Neave (2001) argues, the modern research university emerged as a central institution shaping and being shaped by the experiences of Western powers – namely the Holy Roman Empire and later Europe’s nation-states. Thus, the form of the university that spread throughout the non-Western world via colonialism and educational borrowing had distinct features associated with the West, its rationalist dualism and objective, scientific forms of scholarship (Merriam & Kim, 2007).

Second, in the current era, with global transfers of education and people, scholars have argued that the internationalization of higher education (international students, joint degrees, IBCs) is highly commercialized as a market-driven initiative that mainly seeks to generate profits for the home
institution (Altbach, 2001; Marginson, 2007). Many globalization theorists link this type of transnational, commercial activity to notions of consumer capitalism, again seen as a Western value and economic system (Appadurai, 1996). Thus, while the relevance of the terms Western and non-Western continue to be debated, these terms remain relevant to this study. The aim of this study is not to pinpoint exactly how and where the West and non-West exist, but rather to use those terms to argue that something worth studying is happening when a university – the institutionalization of Western knowledge – is established in a country with a relatively short history of statehood and few indigenous forms of higher learning.

This thesis broadly defines the nations that are importing IBCs as “non-Western”. Although this term sweeps many parts of the world together into one basket, the intent is not to homogenize important contextual dimensions. Accordingly, Chapter Five describes in detail the research sites of the UAE and Malaysia, their historical, social, political, economic and educational contexts. The distinction between Western and non-Western provides a rationale for this study, rather than a theoretical framework. There is extensive scholarship linking the university as an institution to its modern, Western roots, and this study is interested in what happens when that institution enters highly inter-cultural and often non-Western spaces.

**Educational Borrowing**

Western-based education has traveled across borders for centuries, through borrowing and lending – or colonial impositions - of policies and programs. Early forms of educational borrowing were mainly between Western nations although there is a growing area of scholarship on the contributions of Islamic and Chinese civilizations to Western higher learning. Within Europe, as national systems of primary and secondary education began to develop, Jullien (1817) began the process of systematic comparison of nations to identify the strengths of various systems. Western education made significant leaps outside of Europe in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries as colonial powers and mission agencies began to establish formal education in the various colonized territories. The mid-20th Century saw the independence of many colonies with educational development a top priority of the new governments. Comparative education literature identifies the dual drivers, educational borrowing and lending (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000). Educational borrowing refers to the desire of new governments to learn from Western educational models while lending speaks to the development imperative of many former colonies, their
NGOs and international aid programs that sought to equip new nation-states with their own educational practices.

Much of the educational programming transferred from Western to non-Western regions during these periods and continuing until today, has happened at the primary and secondary levels and is called “adapted education.” This refers to the context-specific adoption of certain policies (Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000). Although appropriate context adaptation has often been criticized and has rarely ensured the success of policies, it has been a recurring theme in comparative scholarship (Sadler, 1900; Kandel, 1955; Steiner-Khamsi, 2000).

In stark contrast to the context-aware borrowing and lending of Western educational-policy, is 21st Century cross-border higher education (CBHE). Although CBHE takes different forms (international student movement, joint degrees, IBCs), many CBHE programs are attended by students with the desire to obtain Western degrees, often from a specific nation. Thus, extensive context-adaptation would be counterproductive since these programs gain a certain amount of their prestige by being from Western, mainly Anglo-heritage, countries. Thus, IBCs have little incentive to adapt cross-culturally as comparative education scholars have advocated for years and are fascinating examples of Western education crossing borders with little explicit adaptation.

Conclusion: Summary and Rationale for This Thesis
The literature reviewed in the above sections offers a rationale for the current study. It argues that, a) the university as a key institution in the West has been influential in shaping collective identities in relation to the particular social and political context in which it exists, b) the current expansion of cross-border higher education has created new contexts in which the relationship between university and identity should be explored, and c) the current literature on students’ identities and CBHE is often limited to studies of student mobility in Western contexts. There is a clear need for research investigating students’ identities in relationship to program movement into non-Western locations. To that end, this thesis asks how participation at a Western IBC in a non-Western country supports or challenges students’ multiple identities. Although the select studies reviewed in this chapter approach the concept of identity in a range of ways, the following chapter pinpoints the notion under consideration and sets up a framework with which to analyse the identities of students in multiple locations.
Chapter 3

Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Identity and Higher Education

One might say that whereas human beings were once seen by orthodox sociology as primarily necessity-driven objects of social forces, they tend now to be construed more often as identity-driven or motivated, choosing subjects. (Kempney & Jowlowska, 2002, p. 1)

In other words, ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built.” (Barth, 1998, p. 2)

Introduction

Individuals and the societies in which they exist hold an understanding of who they are and how they relate to others (Erikson, 1968; Bruter, 2005; Cram, 2012). This sense of identity, consciousness or self-awareness has been claimed and broadly studied by several social science disciplines (Paasi, 2003). Political scientists speak of identity as it links communities to political structures such as nation-states or economic communities (Herb & Kaplan, 1999; Breakwell, 2004). Geographers, in contrast, show how identities can be forged around territorial, place-based regions (Baláž & William, 2004; Paasi, 2003). In psychology, individual identity development is the subject of analysis (Erikson 1968; Piaget & Inhelder, 1968; Kohlberg, 1981) while in population studies, scholars trace identity changes in large groups as migration takes people across borders and identities straddle multiple communities (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004). Though some overlap exists between fields, the way identity is conceptualized in each discipline reflects and responds to the foundational body of scholarship in that field. This thesis however, contributes to the field of Higher Education which exists in an intensely interdisciplinary space. The purpose of this chapter is to navigate through the disparate approaches above, describing how the term identity is understood in this study and used to explore experiences of university students enrolled in Western branch-campuses in the UAE and Malaysia.

Currently, scholarship on university students and identity has two main schools: a) the American context in student development research with its strong ties to the field of social-psychology and b) the European literature on student mobility, linked to political science. This chapter begins by reviewing
several relevant theories from each research context, highlighting the salience of more recent scholarship that approaches identity holistically. Next, these theories are synthesized to define identity as the *fluctuating social categories, made tangible through the construction of formal and informal boundaries, that distinguish groups or individuals from one another*. The final section develops a table, the Comparative Identities Index (CII), that is useful in illustrating how the formality of particular identities changes between contexts in relation to institutions of authority such as the university.

**American Research: Identity and College Student Development**

*Identity* has been a core concept in the study of university student development since the 1960’s. Although scholars have used related terms such as *ego, self-concept* and *self-esteem* to pinpoint the non-academic changes students go through in college (Hansford & Hattie, 1982; Loevinger, 1966; Redmore, 1983), none of these concepts is explored in as much depth, nor with as much concern for its influence, as the term *identity*. Yet, as this chapter indicates, the term *identity* has been defined in very different ways in the literature on university student development. Traditional approaches view *identity* as a state of maturity to be achieved, while more recent scholarship, often complementing a critical epistemology, considers how identity, or identification, is constructed (or challenged) by authorities, minorities and individuals. The latter approach is more relevant to this thesis, but both theoretical approaches are outlined below to understand the evolutionary progression of definitions in the field of student development.

**Foundational Theories**

In 1991, American researchers Pascarella and Terenzini set out to review the previous twenty years of literature on the impact of university (college) on students. Their seminal work, *How College Affects Students*, examined hundreds of studies and offered a systematic review of how and under what conditions individuals change as a result of higher education. Their work examined both the cognitive (intellectual, academic) and affective (social, personal) changes that students undergo. A secondary goal of their project was to solidify the theoretical foundation of college student research. It is interesting to note that several of the theories they highlight as foundational prioritize the concept of identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Marcia, 1966). These theories, and the importance they place on identity, have been re-affirmed in later literature and are widely accepted as the parent-theories for much of the research on American college students’ development (Evans, et al., 2009; Jones & Abes, 2013).
Many of these foundational theories mapping the identity development of college students are undertaken from a positivist perspective. Terminology such as *development, achievement or establishment* indicate the tangible, progressive nature of identity change in these paradigms. For the above scholars identity achievement is a state that can in fact be attained and to do so is considered healthy. Furthermore, the process of attainment can be measured quantitatively with testable tools. Many of the variations on the above theories have also been from a positivist paradigm, though many challenged the assumed universality of the vectors or stages. Women, for instance, were shown to have different experiences in college than their male counterparts leading to their own particular stages of development (Josselson, 1973, 1996; Foubert, et al., 2005). Likewise, particular stages have been contextualized for racial minority groups (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Helms, 1990).

**Social-constructivist Theories**

Starting in the 1980’s epistemological and methodological challenges to the positivist, social-psychological orientation of student development research began to emerge. The above theories were deemed too deterministic and were critiqued for measuring students’ progress in identity formation against a pre-set, external standard. Likewise, their concept of identity was seen as too rigid, a universal notion that did not take into account how diverse students adopt, acquire or are given new identities at university. In response, higher education scholars re-conceptualized *identity* as socially constructed and contingent on various external and internal influences (Jones & Abes, 2003; McEwen, 2003; Torres, Jones & Renn, 2009). Central to this approach are the theoretical frameworks of *intersectionality* and *the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity*, both of which provide a guide for studying co-existing identities simultaneously.

**Intersectionality**

The theoretical approach of *intersectionality* has been widely used to explore the experiences of diverse populations in higher education. Intersectionality has its roots in feminist scholarship, developed by racial minority women who felt that the study of their lived experiences should take into account more than just their gender (Grabham, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Hawkesworth, 2006; Lutz, et al., 2011). Research found that many of their experiences were influenced by their gender, race and social class (Collins, 2000; Lykke, 2010). One of the main drivers of intersectionality research is to uncover the power relations that enforce inequality in society, using research as an emancipatory process (Bowleg, 2008; Stewart & McDermott, 2004). Breen (2010) summarized the literature on intersectionality through three main principles,
“a) all social groups are heterogeneous; b) individuals’ experiences are affected by the power dynamics within the social structures in which they are located; and c) there are unique effects of identifying with more than one social group,” (Breen 2010, p. 3).

Figure 1: Model of Intersecting Identities

In the past three decades, intersectionality has spread to many disciplines and has been widely used in critical, phenomenological research to examine diverse elements of individuals’ identities and how these influence their lived experience (Grabham, 2009; Breen, 2010). Intersectionality has been particularly groundbreaking in studies that explore and illuminate the experiences of minority populations in American higher education, focusing on race, gender, sexuality, and social class.

Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

More recently, a framework was developed by Jones and her colleagues that takes the concept of intersecting identities to the next step (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Jones & Abes, 2013). The Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) attempts to incorporate all of an individual’s identities into one framework. The authors distinguish between “social identities (e.g. race, class, gender, religion) and a core sense of self (personal attributes and characteristics)” (Jones, 2009, p. 287). They also take into account the external environment (university campus) and imposing forces that influence students’ identities.
The approach advanced in the MMDI is particularly helpful in reframing identity as socially constructed descriptors or personal features rather than a set of fixed stages through which one progresses. As Jones and Abes (2013) write:

Viewing identities as socially constructed locates identity development within larger historical, social, political and cultural contexts and suggests that identity does not exist outside contingent social realities – and therefore that it is constantly changing amid shifting contexts rather than fixed and stable, (p. xx).

The MMDI has proved a practical tool in academic research and student support services that seek to understand students’ multiple identities and how these are influenced at university.
Summary

The present study builds on the social constructivist approaches to identity research developed in intersectionality and the MMDI. These theories suggest that university students’ identities are constructed, multiple, co-existent and ever-shifting. There is a significant focus in these theories on power; who decides which identities are important and how students are treated because of these identities. In this approach, there is an understanding that different identities are highlighted or diminished in certain contexts, subsequently influencing self-perception and broader university experience.

Methodologically, the MMDI approach was very helpful in guiding this study in its examination of a diverse group of students. The MMDI approach does not assume that a limited set of identities such as race, gender and class are important to students but rather it asks them to select the identities they consider important and to describe how these are influenced at university. Furthermore, this theory, with its distinction between core attributes, such as personality, and orbiting identities, such as religion or class, provides a very helpful way of conceptualizing the divisions between different categories of identity. Finally, the MMDI examines the institutional structures at the university that influence students’ identities as well as students’ own responses to these structures. These last two interrelated processes were examined by this study at branch-campuses in order to understand what identities were promoted by IBCs and the degree to which students embraced these.

For the purposes of this thesis the MMDI approach does not go far enough in sorting identities into relevant analytic categories. National, ethnic, linguistic or regional identities are rarely explored. The MMDI makes the helpful distinction between social identities and a core sense of self, but this thesis argues that a third category needs to be included: formal, institutionalized identities, those that are often prioritized by the political or institutional authority that governs a specific context. The governments and higher education institutions in the UAE and Malaysia have controversial discourses around identity. A multi-level theory is required that considers institutional, social and personal identities in these contexts and how each is positioned at branch-campuses. To construct this third category of formal, institutional identities, this thesis borrows from several theories on collective identities in Europe that are reviewed below.

European Collective Identities

*Political Science*
A second important theory area that has been used in identity research on cross-border higher education comes out of the European Union (EU) and examines students’ identity change during study abroad. This research conceptualizes identity, not as set stages to be achieved, but as identification with, or loyalty to, particular groups. The theoretical underpinnings of this literature are connected to the field of political science, specifically international relations, and seek to understand whether movement within the EU furthers students’ sense of European Identity. These studies draw on the foundational work of Deutsch (1957, 1968) who anticipated that increased interaction between Europeans would gradually lead to a sense of collective identity, legitimizing and strengthening the goals of the EU. Deutsch and his colleagues developed Transactionalist Theory that argues, “increased economic and political cooperation between states facilitates cross-border transactions amongst their citizens, who in turn establish a sense of community and legitimate further integration,” (Kuhn, 2011, p. 811). Much of their early research occurred in the post-World War Two decade and was concerned with avoiding wars and building strong relationships between diverse nations. Although the work of Deutsch, et al. predates the EU by two decades, scholars have more recently revived his line of theorizing to examine collective support of and identification with the EU among its members (Fligstein 2008; Kuhn, 2011). With the creation of the ERASMUS exchange programs in 1987 a tangible population of students emerged with which to test this theory (See Chapter Two).

Complementing Deutsch’s Transactionalist Theory is Allport’s (1979) Contact Theory arguing that sustained contact between diverse groups will reduce intergroup prejudice. Allport suggested the positive impacts of group contact would be present when the following conditions were met: “equal status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and the support of authorities, law or customs,” (Pettigrew, 1998, p.66). Allport was also writing shortly after World War II and was concerned with reducing animosity between diverse European groups. While his work is less concerned with notions of identity, his theory has been tested in numerous studies on student mobility in the European Union and the USA. These studies seek to understand the affective development of university students in intercultural settings, mainly study abroad programs (Nyaupane, Teye, & Paris, 2008; Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josić, & Jon, 2009; Schweisfurth & Gu, 2009).

Although Deutsch and Allport’s theories have been critiqued for their determinism, their approach is helpful in reframing identity as the positioning of individuals in relation to group membership. In their post-war concern with how diverse groups interact, the authors asked questions
that are more relevant to the current era of globalization than many of the foundational theories of
identity and higher education in the American context.

**Anthropology**

In the field of anthropology, Barth (1969, 1998) also explores the result of contact between diverse
groups. However, in contrast to the political scientists above, Barth takes an opposite line of
questioning, asking why diverse ethnic groups maintain their distinct identities despite significant
contact with other groups. Barth (1998) suggests that,

> Boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them. In other words, categorical
> ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but
do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are
maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life
histories, (12).

For Barth, the persistence of divisive identities despite regular contact can be understood by exploring
the social processes that separate people into distinct categories. When boundaries are maintained in
spite of regular contact, it is important to investigate the indicators or signals of group membership as
well as the particular forms of contact that encourage divisions. He notes that, “the persistence of
ethnic groups in contact implies not only criteria and signals for identification, but also a structuring of
interaction which allows the persistence of cultural differences, (p.16).

> Barth’s work is very applicable to this thesis research as he moves away from a dichotomy
where diverse groups are either unified or in conflict. He suggests that identity is maintained or
diminished through particular forms of interaction and a division of labour that can be examined in the
signals between groups. Barth says: “...ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social
interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which
embracing social systems are built,” (Barth, 1969, 2). Barth’s approach guides this thesis to examine
what aspects of branch-campuses maintain divisive identities for students, specifically the formal and
informal interactions that include or exclude students within the social structure.
Holistic Research on European Collective Identity

Most relevant to this thesis is the recent theorizing on European identity that complements the American literature by recognizing that diverse identities are part of the whole person and should therefore be studied in one all-encompassing framework. Frequent distinctions have traditionally been made in the literature on European identity between personal and social identities - the former relating to locally-known collectives while the latter relates to large-scale communities like nations (Bruter, 2005; Cinnirella, 1997; Deaux, 1993). Other studies distinguish between civic and cultural identities – civic being one’s official status as a citizen and cultural relating to one’s sense of belonging (Bruter, 2003; Edwards and Foley, 1997; Fennema & Tillie, 1999; Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997). However, several authors in the European context approach the study of identity in a more holistic manner, studying both personal and social/political identities together. Although Deaux (1993) was instrumental in originally parsing out personal and social identity, she suggests that the two concepts cannot be separated “cleanly.” Rather, “social and personal identities are fundamentally interrelated. Personal identity is defined, at least in part, by group memberships, and social categories are infused with personal meaning,” (Deaux, 1993, p. 5). Bauman (1999) also illustrates the tight connection between personal and group identities:

Personal identity gives meaning to the “I.” Social identity guarantees that meaning, and in addition allows one to speak of the “we,” in which the otherwise precarious and insecure “I” may be lodged. (Bauman, 1999, p. xxxi).

Breakwell (2004) goes perhaps the farthest in shifting research away from isolated studies on minute identities, by entirely dismissing the distinction between social and personal identities. Using the analogy of a constellation her holistic approach argues that people have one identity which is made up of several elements or memberships of formal and informal social groupings. As in a constellation with stars of varying brightness, certain identities are brighter or dimmer depending on the contexts and influencing factors. At the beginning of each student interview for this study, Breakwell’s constellation analogy was used to give students an understanding of how identity is conceptualized in this study (see Chapter Four).

This more recent work on European identity particularly complements the American research on multiple identities. It further reinforces the idea that studying identity in a global world requires a more holistic framework that addresses the complexity of multiple identities. The main contribution these
theories make to this thesis is, while they recognize and study multiple identities together, they assert the differences between these identities. Like Jones and Abe’s (2013) MMDI and its distinction between core attributes and surrounding identities, the European theories also study several identities simultaneously sorting these into the analytic categories of social and political identities.

Theoretical Framework

To reiterate, this study asks how diverse students, enrolled in Western IBCs in non-Western nations, perceive the university as supporting or challenging their multiple identities. This section synthesizes the relevant theories outlined above to develop an appropriate theoretical framework with which to answer this question. Below, my definition of identity is presented and explained, followed by the development of the Comparative Identity Inventory that assists in comparing the nature of identity in distinct contexts.

*Definition of identity: Multiple & Co-existent, Socially-constructed and Ever-shifting*

Drawing on the above studies, this thesis defines identity as: the fluctuating social categories, made tangible through the construction of formal and informal boundaries that distinguish groups or individuals from one another. Within this definition the nature of identity is understood as multiple and co-existent, socially constructed, and ever-shifting. Figure three below illustrates these characteristics and considers their implications for research.
Figure 3: The Nature of Identity and the Implications for Research

First, identity is multiple and co-existent. The students enrolled at Western branch-campuses come from a range of backgrounds and interact with multiple institutions, national and regional authorities as well as local, social communities. There is no single set of pre-constructed identities that can match all of the students. The aforementioned American and European scholars who study identity holistically suggest individuals have many identities and these identities can co-exist. Building on their approach I suggest the study of identity among diverse students should be the study of identities to include the multiple ways students understand themselves and their connection to larger groups. Multiple identities co-exist as individuals are simultaneously located in multiple groups, and hold numerous personal characteristics.

Second, identity is socially-constructed through the dynamic interrelation of many factors. International branch-campuses (IBCs) represent one institution among many with which students are affiliated. In the scholarship on European nationalism, Anderson (1983) and Neave (2001) both argue that common language, institutions and the construction of collective histories are essential in building a national identity among diverse people. Students at IBCs interact with different identity priorities in
their national context, university classrooms and social community. This study aligns with the above scholars who view identities as socially-constructed, developing form and coherence through the role of institutions.

Third, identities are flexible and ever-shifting in response to context and personal agency. This conceptualization presents identities as bounded categories that are flexible and shifting in nature. When students move between educational or social contexts, the identities that they, and the surrounding institutions prioritize, change.

It is important to note that this thesis presents an understanding of identity as social categories, yet the term *identity* is still used as the main descriptor of the concept under investigation. Other relevant terms such as *social categories* or *principles of organization*, were not selected as the main descriptor since this thesis predominantly contributes to the field of higher education, and identity is such a foundational concept in that field.

Employing this conceptualization of identity, the research question then asks how students’ identities are supported or challenged at university. This question of support and challenge assumes a dynamic relationship between students and the IBC and leads to two further questions that were considered in designing this study. First is the question of power which is so central to critical theorists in their study of American students’ identities. Who holds the power to determine what social categories are prioritized? Who or what determines students’ position in these social categories? What agency do students’ have in these processes? Second is the concept of loyalty which is so central to the European literature on regional identity. While particular identities are prioritized in different settings through informal social interaction or formal institutionalized structures, this does not guarantee individuals will adopt or form loyalty to the prescribed identities. Chapter Seven, in its analysis of this thesis’ findings, considers the context of the IBC, how it prioritizes particular identities and how students’ respond to these new identity priorities.

**Analytical Framework: Comparative Identities Index**

This study joins with many of the scholars reviewed above, arguing that identity should be studied holistically, with multiple identities examined in one study. At the same time, scholars suggest that the distinctions between categories of identities remain analytically helpful, particularly in understanding the changing nature of identities. This thesis merges the MMDI’s two categories of identity, core
attributes and context, with the European literature on social and political identities to establish three guiding, analytic categories of identity: political/institutional, social/informal and personal.

Figure 4: Three analytical categories of identities

The first category, **institutional/formal**, includes identities related to group membership that is formalized or explicitly controlled in some way by an institutional authority that establishes policy. The second category, **social/informal**, includes identities that are still strongly linked to group membership but these groups maintain an informal legitimacy by establishing accepted social norms, rather than instituting policy. The third category mirrors McEwens’ MMDI by focusing on personal characteristics or attributes that are held as particular to individuals, separating or distinguishing them from the group. The formality of the identities as externally-imposed, bounded categories increases with each category of identity as one moves from personal up to institutional. The first two categories align with Bourdieu’s notions of **institutionalized** or **diffused** education that appear in his discussions of pedagogic action and authority (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977). He distinguishes between the agents who influence social reproduction, suggesting that institutions are formal agents with authority to take pedagogic action. In contrast, social formations like elite groups or families maintain their legitimacy by establishing norms that are generally accepted by the group and work in the group’s interests. In the latter, informal group power relations are often invisible. In both cases Bourdieu considers the power of the group to rest in “symbolic domination” which occurs through societal acceptance of their norms, values and interests.
**Benefits of the CII**

This approach to the study of identities is particularly helpful in straddling the divide in identity research between the psycho-social and political fields of study that is so evident in the research done in America and Europe (Chapter Two). It provides space to consider the nature of diverse identities and how these change in different contexts. Furthermore, it broadens the discussion of identities to include categories beyond nation-state or region which often dominate collective scholarship. It is also flexible enough to account for multiple institutions and their role in formalizing identities.

**Using the CII**

This analytic framework can be used in two ways – to categorize identities within one context or to compare identity change across contexts. Figure 5 provides an example of how the framework might be used to categorize the identities of one individual or a homogenous collective in one context. In this example, citizenship, religion and profession are the formal, institutionalized identities; the informal identities class, ethnicity, language and gender are refereed by norms across groups; and appearance, family, ability and spirituality are personal identities which may have few social norms or group connections.

![Figure 5: Example of Using the Analytic Framework to Categorize Identities](Image)
In contrast, Figure 6 below is used to compare contexts and show how different identities are institutionalized, informal or personal in each location. Contextualization is a key component of this comparative study since identities that may be informal in one setting can be formalized through an institution in another. For instance, family is one category that most students unconsciously belong to from birth. The American literature often focuses on students’ independence in moving away from this identity in late adolescence. However, family is a fascinating example of an identity that may be personal in the context of North America; social/informal in the Middle East where large kinship networks exist; and institutionalized in countries of the Arab Gulf or Malaysia where the political power of particular families is part of the formal ruling structures. Likewise ethnicity can be a social/informal identity in one context such as urban Canada where no formal authority governs the position or participation of most ethnic groups. Rather, invisible power dynamics are at play establishing norms within and between groups. In contrast, a great deal of institutionalized authority is used to govern the position and participation of Canada’s aboriginal communities due to the particular history of that ethnic group and its relationship with the state. Figure 6 illustrates how the analytic framework might be used to position these identities to compare contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Context A</th>
<th>Context B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political/Institutional</td>
<td>• Ethnicity</td>
<td>• Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/Informal</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>• Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Comparative Framework for Multiple Contexts
Conclusion

In this study, students’ multiple identities are explored as social categories constructed by particular structures and individuals’ reactions to these. Although this study advocates for a holistic exploration of diverse identities within one framework, the analytic categories that distinguish identities as formal/institutional, informal/social or informal/personal are retained as helpful indicators. Chapter Seven builds on these foundational ideas, developing the Comparative Identity Inventory (CII) to illustrate how IBC structures prioritize a set of identities that is different from those of the host country. Ultimately, students’ multiple identities are constructed through a dynamic interaction between the social categories ascribed to them and students’ responses to these. The theoretical framework above provides a visual guide to how identity is studied within this thesis. The following chapter outlines the research methods used to examine student identities at IBCs in the UAE and Malaysia.
Chapter 4
Methodology and Research Methods

After the identity-mapping exercise was complete, before moving on to talk about the influence of university on his identities, Stanislav asked me for a copy of his identity map.

Grace: So what we have done here is we’ve created a bit of a picture of who you are.

Stanislav: Can I have a copy of that? It is very interesting.

Grace: Why don’t you take a picture?

Stanislav: Okay, I’ll take a picture.<Takes out phone and photographs the paper>

This is very good idea to show people who they are.

(Fieldnotes-February 16, 2014)

Data collection, with all its competing paradigms and methods, must be acknowledged as a constructive or alternative process. In the quote above, Stanislav indicates that the identity map he and I created together showed him who he was. Despite the fact that we wrote down his answers verbatim, the process of writing his perceived identities in one place had the power to further his self-understanding.

Chapter Three argued that identity is a socially constructed, multiple and ever-shifting concept, visible in the social boundaries between groups and individuals. Joining with Charmaz (2006), this thesis uses “those concepts as points of departure to form interview questions, to look at data, to listen to interviewees, and to think analytically about the data,” (17). In order to meaningfully investigate students’ identities within this theoretical framework, qualitative data collection and analysis methods were used.

Chapter Overview
The aim of this chapter is to describe and justify this study’s methodology, its methods of data collection and means of analysis. The first section outlines the ontological and epistemological position of the research. The second section presents the recruitment, student sample and data collection methods.
Section three outlines the multiple stages of data analysis. The final section of this chapter explains how the study accounted for the language and cross-cultural differences between researcher and participant, the centrality of comparison and comparative education, the trustworthiness of the research and the limitations of the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

- How do students enrolled in Western-run IBCs in diverse, non-Western nations perceive the university as supporting or challenging their identities?
- What identities do students value or find influential?
- Do students feel these identities are supported or challenged by their IBC experiences?
- Does students’ time at an IBC foster new, salient identities?

Methodological Orientation

Nature is understood now to be relational, ecological, and interdependent. Reality is constituted by events and relationships rather than separate substances or separate particles. (Barbour as quoted in Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, 26).

A brief word on ontology is necessary as the first step in establishing a rationale for the use of qualitative methods in this project. In exploring the concept of identity this research embraces a relational ontology. A relational ontology borrows from the biological “new” sciences that use the analogy of an eco-system to describe social life (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010). In this view, the individuals, communities, and institutions associated with a particular phenomenon are all interconnected with multiple actions and reactions comprising their relationship. As such, this ontology is necessarily concerned with notions of complexity and understanding. In contrast with trends in positivist research which seek to reduce causality to a single point or to predict future outcomes, a relational ontology seeks to articulate the essence of multiple and complex elements of the phenomenon under investigation. A relational ontology aligns with the arguments in Chapter Three that suggest that all identities are interlinked and should be studied together as part of a whole person within their socio-political context. Answering the research questions that drive this thesis while accounting for a
A relational ontology requires methods of data collection that allow students to describe in detail their identities, their experiences at Western branch-campuses and the complexity that exists within each.

**Symbolic Interactionism**

Complementing a relational ontology, the epistemological position of symbolic interactionism suggests that reality can only be known as one interacts with one’s surroundings. This prioritizes individuals’ experiences as the portal through which one understands the world (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934; McPhail & Rexroat, 1979). Thus, symbolic interactionists approach the study of social life starting with the everyday lived experiences of human beings and their perceptions of these (Merriam, 2009). Studies within this approach largely employ a qualitative methodology and provide research participants/subjects with extensive opportunity to discuss, describe or narrate their experiences. Because this study is concerned with an intangible, constructed and fluctuating concept, namely *identity*, a symbolic interactionist approach allows the researcher to start with students’ own perceptions of their daily experiences and to look outward through their eyes to see how they locate themselves within their social context, in this case an international branch-campus in a politically complex emerging nation. The subjective experiences of the student participants in this study provide the body of data used to answer the research questions.

In research on university students’ identities, the contributions of constructivist and critical theorists have increased the importance of qualitative, phenomenological research methods. Value is often placed on how students perceive and articulate their own identities, and how they make meaning of their lived experiences (Jones & Abes, 2013; Stevens, 2004; Howard & Stevens, 2000). Students’ own descriptions of their perceived identity shifts are central to the constructivist and critical approach and are valued as one way of understanding these identity shifts from a participant-centered view.

Chapter Three argued that there is a need for a study that examines simultaneously many elements of students’ identities in relationship to a formative institution such as the university in an era of cross-border higher education. Both a relational ontology and symbolic interactionism align with this argument, uncovering and embracing the complexity of the interconnections that define the context of globalized, cross-border higher education.
Data Collection Methods

The data for this study was assembled using campus tours, context related interviews with faculty and administrators, student interviews and observations. Table 1 shows the number of each.

Table 1: Data Collection Methods and Frequency of Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Tours</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Interviews</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Interviews</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both the UAE and Malaysia campus tours were scheduled during the two weeks prior to beginning the student interviews. These tours, as well as the context interviews, took place at public and private universities and contributed to a deeper understanding of the national higher education context and specific institutional culture. The context interviews were unrecorded conversations, conducted with various stakeholders in both nations. In Dubai the context interviews including two government officials, one university president, one department chair, and several professors and student services staff at the participating IBCs. In Malaysia, context interviews were conducted with one university director, one department chair, and three professors. The context interviews took place before and after the student interviews. When they occurred after, specific themes from the student interviews were discussed to obtain further detail or clarification. Throughout the data analysis, the observations were used on occasion to clarify and affirm the meaning attributed to the interview data.

The observations took place following student interviews in an attempt to confirm particular themes. The observations were conducted over several hours in busy student hubs in each nation and detailed fieldnotes were written as students were observed (Merriam, 2009). Although the data collected through each method helped guide this thesis, the largest source of data was the student interviews, the sample and scope of which are outlined in detail below. The interview data is given a higher priority in this study because it was the proposed method of data collection in the original study design and was subject to a systematic refining from proposal to analysis.
Institutions

A total of four institutions were invited to participate in this study: two in Dubai and two in the greater Kuala Lumpur area of Malaysia. In each nation there was one institution whose home campus was in the UK and one whose home campus was in Australia. The institutions were chosen because they fit four important criteria: a) they offered undergraduate business programs, b) they had operated for more than five years, c) they had a physical presence in the country and d) they aspired to offer a full-campus experience including extra-curricular, student clubs. All four institutions fit Lane’s definition of branch-campus outlined in Chapter Two. Branch-campuses with a long-term presence in the country were ideal sites for this study since students experience many of the factors associated with identity formation in the American literature such as full-time enrolment, living on campus and joining in campus groups.

Table 2: Participating IBCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location/Affiliation</th>
<th>Student Population</th>
<th>Year Established</th>
<th>Number of undergraduate degrees offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution A</td>
<td>(Dubai/UK)</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution B</td>
<td>(Dubai/OZ)</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution C</td>
<td>(Malaysia/UK)</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution D</td>
<td>(Malaysia/OZ)</td>
<td>6700</td>
<td>1994*</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Institution D started as a 2+1 twinning program in 1994. By 1999 students were able to take their full degree in Malaysia and a range of campus experiences are now offered.

Although the four institutions considered in this study were split between their affiliation with the UK and Australia, in practice their country of origin was less definitive of students’ experiences than other distinguishing features such as the scope of their programs and their campus environment. In Dubai, the IBCs from the UK and Australia were located directly next to one another in matching buildings, part of the education free zone in which they rented space. Both institutions employed mainly expatriate instructors and offered a range of student clubs and groups. Furthermore, these institutions offered three year degree programs in a range of subjects, preceded by a mandatory foundation year that they offered on campus.
In contrast, the sample institutions in Malaysia were quite different from one another. The UK institution was housed on a large, rural campus built specifically for its own use, on its own land. The Australian institution however, in a similar style to those in Dubai, was part of an education zone. In Malaysia, however, the education zone was sponsored by a corporate partner and students had internship and employment opportunities in the partner corporation. Both institutions in Malaysia had more local instructors than expatriates.

In Malaysia, the sample institutions also offered three year degrees, but students completed the mandatory foundation year before enrolling in their degree program. This was done as part of the A-levels in high school or in one of several private colleges.

**Student Sample**

The student-participants who contributed to this study were recruited from final year business classes at each institution. They were asked to answer the interview questions reflectively, thinking back on their three years at the institution. The student participants had three qualifying features: a) they were enrolled in a Western branch-campus, b) they had attended the university for more than two years and, c) they were enrolled in a business-related degree program. Since business degrees account for 50 percent of the degrees offered by branch-campuses, the last requirement ensured the data was widely reflective of student experiences at IBCs (Karram, 2013). The first section of Chapter Seven provides demographic information on the students who participated. Complete identity profiles of each student can be found in Appendix B.

**Recruitment**

In the UAE recruitment took place in person following a brief talk at the beginning of four business classes. A sign-up list was left at the back of the class and students were invited to sign up for the interviews. Students were under no obligation to participate in this study and the majority of students in each class did not sign up. However, the response from the four classes was excellent. More than fifty students volunteered for the study and a representative sample was chosen from these volunteers to reflect the overall gender, ethnic and linguistic diversity of the university as indicated by the institutional research offices. No Emirate students volunteered for the study in the UAE, which was expected since Emirate students are a very small minority at the sample institutions, being more likely to attend local public or local private institutions rather than IBCs (See Chapter Five more detail).
The recruitment in Malaysia took much longer and proved more difficult. Snowball recruitment was used encouraging students to invite their friends. In-person appeals were made in only two classes. Only 26 students volunteered for the study and 25 of these volunteers were interviewed. Unfortunately one of the participants did not fit the criteria, majoring in science rather than business. This interview was removed from the data in Malaysia.

**Ethics**

Participation in this study posed no obvious threat to the students. The study was deemed low-risk by the University of Toronto and its Ethical Review Board passed the project in less than four weeks. All but three interviews were conducted in a private office. During the interview students were free to decline any questions and to refuse to be audio recorded (which one student did). Rather than feel threatened, the student participants often remarked how happy they were to have a chance to discuss their identities and practice their English-language interview skills before graduating and looking for jobs.

**Interviews**

As Charmaz contends: “Language plays a crucial role in how and what we code. Most fundamentally the empirical world does not appear to us in some natural state apart from human experience. Rather we know the empirical world through language and the actions we take toward it,” (p. 46). This study, including the proposal, recruitment and written analysis would not exist without language. The essential, and perhaps most difficult, language event in this research was the interview process. The introduction, questions, clarification of answers, and the distilling of all this through transcription comprised the substance of the research.

*Clarity of communication.* Each step of the data collection depended on the ability of the students and researcher to communicate and understand each other. Three main techniques were used throughout the interview process to ensure the clearest possible communication and deepest possible mutual understanding between students and researcher. First, all the students were asked the same introductory question: “This study is about identity; what does that term or idea mean to you? How do you understand it?” This question probed students’ understanding of the concept as well as their ability to understand the form of Canadian English used by the interviewer. Many of the students had a ready answer while others asked for the question to be repeated. The majority of students had little difficulty understanding the aim of the research and the subsequent progression of the questions.
The second technique involved repeating students’ responses back to them after each section of the interview. Students were invited to confirm the summary of their responses and elaborate on anything they felt was unclear. The interview concluded by the researcher restating the main points once again and telling the participants what aspects of their responses would be highlighted in the research.

The final communication strategy invited students to review the analysis of their interviews and to confirm that the intent of their responses was clearly understood. Within the three months following each interview students received an email with a summary of the transcript, highlighting the main points which would be included in the Findings chapter. Students were asked to confirm what was written and were invited to add or correct anything they would like. Eleven of the student participants (8 from Malaysia and 3 from Dubai) responded to this invitation and all 11 confirmed the summary and interpretation.

**Interview Protocol.** The interviews followed a semi-structured interview protocol. The overarching flow of the interview questions used Creswell’s (2007) approach, beginning with descriptive questions to clarify the phenomenon under investigation and then moving on to questions that explore process and causal relationships.

Each interview began with the clarifying questions above. Second, students were invited to map out their identities. In the mapping exercise students were provided with eight pre-determined categories and they filled in the details of each (see Appendix C). They then added any categories they felt were missing and completed the map by selecting the identities that they valued the most.

The third part of the interview discussed these identities and asked students whether these had been supported or challenged at university. This was the longest portion of the interview. The fourth and final section asked students what new identities they held as a result of their enrolment at an IBC.

**Data Analysis**

In order to manage the complexity of a comparative study on diverse students’ identities, this research used the data analysis techniques commonly associated with *Grounded Theory*. These techniques included the Constant Comparative Method, three-step coding, categorization, modeling and reviewing the literature in light of the findings. This provided a systematic and rigorous template with which to
analyse and model students’ multiple identities. A brief overview of Grounded Theory is helpful before elaborating on these techniques in more detail.

**Grounded Theory**

Grounded Theory was developed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967) in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* which outlines both the philosophical position and the techniques associated with the approach. Since then, further scholarship has expanded and developed their ideas, acknowledging diverse research paradigms and social change (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz 2006; Clarke, 2005; Morse, Stern, Corbin & Bowers, 2009). Grounded Theory is situated in the broader world of phenomenology that seeks to understand the complexity of how individuals make meaning of their lived experience. The aim of the approach is to move beyond the intense, descriptive studies associated with phenomenology and develop theories or models in abstraction (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). At the core of this approach is letting the data speak, working inductively from the data to create theory. As Merriam (2009) notes, “the end result of this type of qualitative study is a theory that emerges from, or is “grounded” in, the data,” (p. 29). Theories of this sort are termed substantive rather than the modernist tradition of grand theories and focus on everyday processes of people’s lives and often have a direct applicability to practice.

Numerous studies on American college students’ identities have used qualitative, phenomenological methods in general and Grounded Theory in particular (Brown, Stevens, Troiano, & Schneider, 2002; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Komives, Owen, Longermeam, Mainella, Osteen, 2005; Libin, 2009; Renn, 2003). Several studies in the field of medical education have also used Grounded Theory to understand students’ learning and identity development (Randle, 2001; Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006). In these studies of identity, Grounded Theory allows for the depth of understanding and consideration of complexity mentioned above. It is also particularly suited to research on processes, as it can be used to explore the ways in which people move through or experience a certain process. For this reason, many education studies employ Grounded Theory to understand more deeply the nuances of how students in a certain context experience learning.

Much has changed in the forty years since Glaser and Strauss first introduced Grounded Theory to the world of social sciences. The values-free, positivistic approaches to research have been challenged repeatedly and social constructivists have advanced the use of qualitative research, re-framing knowledge as co-constructed through interactions with the world. Grounded Theory scholars
Charmaz (2000; 2006) and Clarke (2005) re-positioned much of the scholarship on Grounded Theory, the former emphasizing its “emergent, constructivist elements” (2000, p. 510) while the latter argues for “relativist/perspectival understandings,” (p.xviii). In both of these more recent views, Grounded Theory is valued for its “flexible, heuristic strategies,” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510).

**Grounded Theory Techniques**

Although this thesis research did not hold rigidly to the full Grounded Theory method, the data analysis process was guided by the techniques developed by the theorists above. The first technique of Grounded Theory used in this research was the Constant Comparative Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a technique of simultaneous data collection and analysis. The Constant Comparative Method is achieved by transcribing each interview before the next one is conducted in order to use the findings from the former interviews to inform those that follow. This strategy, necessary in such an exploratory study, was valuable in systematically building themes from the emerging body of data as the interviews progressed. The following table, showing the first half of the interview schedule from Dubai, shows how the intervening days between interviews were used to transcribe and code the interviews.

Table 3: Interview and Transcription Schedule from Dubai

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DUBAI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb.9.2014 (2-5pm)</td>
<td>Interviews 1 &amp; 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb.9.2014 (7-9pm)</td>
<td>Partial Transcription &amp; Coding of 1&amp;2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb.10.2014</td>
<td>Interviews 3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb.11.2014</td>
<td>Transcription &amp; Coding of 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb.12.2014</td>
<td>Interviews 7-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb.13.2014</td>
<td>Transcription &amp; Coding of 5-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb.15.2014</td>
<td>Transcription &amp; Coding of 8-9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Constant Comparative Method (CCM) also provided a means to improve the wording and content of the questions in each subsequent interview. This was particularly important when students were limited in their English language skills. Furthermore, the method was an ideal technique to map multiple identities in diverse students. As Clark (1998) notes, “one can avoid misrepresenting collective social actors as monolithic by examining diversity within worlds, while still tracking and tracing their overall collective perspectives, ideologies, thrusts and goals,” (p. 265). Indeed, the ongoing data analysis process allowed for this balance.

Grounded Theory also provided a systematic, three-step strategy for coding the data and establishing themes (Charmaz, 2006). The first round of coding approaches the transcriptions line by line, naming each segment of data. The second round establishes themes from the diverse codes and the final round draws relationships between the themes, modeling them on a conceptual level. This process of coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) borrowed the strategy of microanalysis to examine each transcript word by word and phrase by phrase. Instead of giving one meaning to each word or phrase, a chart was created that categorized all the possible meanings of a phrase to provide contrasting options and to highlight the interpretation that was most plausible, in light of the broader content of the interview. A volunteer research assistant was brought into this process to review each transcript and challenge the microanalysis and coding. His role, in line with Strauss and Corbin (1998) was to seek dissonance and present disconfirming evidence, forcing me to justify my interpretation.

Finally, Grounded Theory emphasizes setting aside the literature and letting the data speak. In an exploratory study of this type, where extensive literature exists in both America and Europe (see Chapter Two), it is particularly difficult to approach the new context without imposing the former literature or theoretical positions. Built into Grounded Theory is the principle that the data will inform the literature - not the other way around. With this aim, Grounded Theory provides a helpful way to study non-Western students without making assumptions driven by the current Western literature. As Creswell (2007) notes, Grounded Theory is useful at times when existing theories “were developed and tested on samples and populations other than those of interest to the qualitative researcher,” (p.66).

Although the techniques of Grounded Theory were the main tools of analysis used when examining the data, this study is not tightly bound by the forms of Grounded Theory in the final discussion of Chapter Seven. Where Grounded Theory would suggest modeling out all the causal relationships between themes, this thesis uses themes to reflect on previous literature and to model a more flexible heuristic illustrating the relationship between student identities and institutions.
Further Considerations

Trustworthiness

Each of the communication strategies used to deepen mutual understanding between researcher and participant also contributed to the trustworthiness of this study. Although quantitative research is often concerned with the validity of the research design, trustworthiness and authenticity are more central to ensuring a qualitative study truly represents what participants intended to communicate (Morrow, 2005; Rolfe, 2006). The introductory question on identity, the continual re-confirming of students’ answers and the post-interview summary confirmations all contributed to trustworthy and authentic data collection.

A final aspect of the interviews that encouraged trustworthy findings was the continual use of visual aids to support the interview questions. The mapping of students’ identities used a printed form that provided both student and researcher with a common focus. The written words ensured that students were both reading and hearing the concepts under discussion.

Cross-cultural Approaches

The techniques implemented to promote trustworthiness also served to mitigate any cross-cultural barriers to understanding that arose. Although differences were encountered repeatedly in language and in the meaning placed on certain terms, the use of a common assessment question at the beginning of the interview and the frequent re-stating of students’ responses reduced these issues.

Limitations

This study was limited by its exclusive use of the English language for all interviews. Although the students were enrolled in degree programs that used English as the language of instruction, several students - mainly in Malaysia - had challenges in their conversational English. The concept of identity is often linked with one’s verbal interaction in a particular context; therefore communicating with students in their preferred language may have strengthened the study. The use of English may have limited the extent of the interview discussion for those students who were less capable in English, since the students were presumably not able to express the full range of their thoughts in English.
A second limitation was the fact that only 11 of the students responded to the email invitation to review their interview summary. In retrospect, the email should have been sent multiple times within a few weeks of the interview to encourage more responses.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the methodology used to collect and analyze data for this thesis. A qualitative approach, guided by the key analysis techniques of Grounded Theory, led this study. The main data source was student interviews, supplemented by context interviews, campus tours and observations. Although some limitations were evident, the strategies used to ensure trustworthiness and cross-cultural understanding helped to decrease their influence. The following chapter provides an in-depth examination of the two national contexts in which this study was conducted, their social and political history and their current higher education sector.
...Education has been the policy area which has constantly provoked the most controversy among the political elites and sub-elites of the three ethnic communities [in Malaysia]. (Enloe, 1968, p. 373).

Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia are relatively new nation-states that gained independence from colonial powers in the mid-20th Century. The processes of state formation and nation-building in each country involved continual debate over which ethnic groups within the country should be granted citizenship and exercise control over - or have access to - state-regulated institutions such as education. Thus, in both countries, questions of ethnic identity have been central to political policies and their subsequent social reactions. Over the past decade higher education has become an important part of these countries’ economic growth as the governments have taken steps to develop higher education hubs, recruiting both foreign providers and foreign students. Amid expanding and diversifying higher education, the broader social divisions along the lines of citizenship, ethnicity and religion are very apparent. There are many voices contributing to the debates over education and identity in these contexts including governments, diverse ethnic groups and their respective political affiliates. This is the complex backdrop against which Western branch-campuses are offering university programs to diverse bodies of students.

Chapter Overview

As the previous chapters outline, the largest bodies of research on higher education and identity come from the American scholarship on individual identities and the European scholarship on collective, political or ethnic identities. I conclude Chapter Two by suggesting that the political and social context of the scholarly research shapes how identity is both studied and experienced within that context. Therefore this chapter presents the salient features of the research contexts for this study, providing a deeper understanding of the historical, political, social and economic factors that have shaped how identity and higher education relate in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia. In the historical overview of each country four broad time periods are considered: pre-independence and the colonial
experience, independence, post-1980’s economic growth and recent trends (2000-2014). The concluding section offers a comparison between the countries and considers the broader research questions of this thesis.

**Contextual Framework**

The contextual information highlighted in the following sections explains how issues of identity have become central to the position of cross-border higher education (CBHE) in both the UAE and Malaysia. Since the beginning of Comparative Education as a field of study, scholars have advocated for understanding the broader social, political and economic context in which education takes place.

Context considerations have received particular emphasis in cases where one educational system or institution is borrowed from or reproduced in another nation-state. (Kandel, 1955; Sadler, 1900). As Chapter Two outlined, however, many studies of cross-border higher education focus on the pragmatics of operating these programs or on individual student’s perceptions of the programs and few focus on the broader contexts in which they operate. Steiner-Khamsi (2000) suggests this is a common weakness that occurs when a new academic trend sparks an epidemic of scholarship, too often leaving matters of context behind. Cross-border Higher Education (CBHE) and its related phenomena, globalization and internationalization, are examples of research “epidemics” that scholars rush to study without deep understandings of context, although “the context in which epidemics emerge, matters a great deal,” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, p. 2). This chapter affirms the need to understand the context of CHBE, particularly international branch-campuses (IBCs) by investigating the broader social, political and economic contexts of the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia.

**United Arab Emirates**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a relatively new country with little land whose economy and population are growing exponentially. Its approximately 83 600 square kilometers are located on a northern point of the east end of the Arabian peninsula. Oman lies to the north and east and Saudi Arabia to the South. The UAE is a federation of seven Emirates including Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain. Each Emirate is based mainly around a central city with its own distinct state politics. Dubai is the most populated Emirate with 36% of the UAE’s population. Abu Dhabi is the capital city with 31% of the population.
Between 2000 and 2010 the average annual population growth rate of the UAE was 10.68 % resulting in a population of 7.2 million\(^1\) at the end of 2011 (UAE Interact, 2013). This incredible growth is largely due to the immigration of expatriate workers who move to the region for employment. Expatriates have little opportunity for citizenship but are welcome in the country with work-permits readily available. This has led to a distinct situation in which Emirates citizens are only 11.5% of the overall population (UAE Interact, 2013).

**Pre-Independence 1830’s - 1971**

The present-day United Arab Emirates (UAE) is known for its rich oil-revenues which have led to incredible economic and infrastructural growth, drawing large numbers of foreign workers to the region. However, historians of the lower Gulf region are quick to point out that this single-resource, economic boom is not the first of its kind in the region’s history (Abdullah, 1978; Davidson, 2008; Hudson, 1999; Khalifa, 1979). From the 1830’s the UAE coastal region, then called the *Trucial States*, began to gain attention for its production of high-quality pearls. The prosperity of the pearling industry was notable for developing a wealthy merchant class and for drawing migrant labour to the region for the first time.

Prior to the pearling boom, the few groups that populated the lower Gulf’s inland region were mainly nomadic, living on vast tracts of desert and waging small-scale attacks against each other to secure trading routes and maintain access to the sparse desert resources. Other groups were involved in limited agricultural activities that were not particularly lucrative. On the coasts, the economies were based on fishing with the ports of Umm al-Qawain and Dubai standing as the main commercial centres (Khalifa, 1979).

With the 1830’s pearling boom came large numbers of migrants from British India. During this era the first large-scale divisions between “local” and “foreign” began. Complex power divisions existed between Arab pearl merchants and Indian migrants. Since pearling was considered more “honourable

\(^1\) Due to frequent changes in the number of migrants the exact population of the UAE is uncertain. The World Bank (2013) placed the number closer to 9.2 million while the Kuwait-based Diplomatic Centre suggests it is 8.5 million. For this thesis, the more moderate count from the UAE department of statistics survey 2011 is used.
work,” the local Arab population maintained a monopoly on pearling and the Indian migrants became involved in shop-keeping and trade (Davidson, 2005). For the most part the Arab “locals” were able to limit the types of work Indian migrants could do. However, an elite group of Indian migrants, the Banians, established themselves as a financial class, offering monetary advances to sustain the pearl merchants until the harvest season. This increased the Banians’ position of power which heightened tensions between the two groups. Furthermore, many of the middle class Indian migrants held British passports due to the British rule of India, and thus they often had more privileges of citizenship where the British were concerned than their local, Arab counterparts.

The ongoing tension between the two resident groups was exacerbated in the late 1920’s as the pearl industry declined. With the collapse of the world economy during the 1930’s, and the subsequent return to regional protectionism, emerging economies became isolated (Davidson, 2006). The Trucial States’ new dependency on international markets to buy their pearls meant this collapse was devastating. In 1929, more than 60 pearling boats were seized in response to their owners defaulting on their loans. The Banian lenders filed a formal grievance with the British Political Resident who held mediation power over the region. The British found in favour of the Banians and pressured the wealthy Shaikh’s to ensure loan re-payment (Abdullah, 1978). Following this dispute and in light of the collapse of the pearl industry, most of the Indian residents left the region in the 1930’s. Their departure was significant. Although many of the Arab residents had also migrated to the region from as far away as Iran/Persia their lack of emigration during the economic decline entrenched their identity as “local,” (Hudson, 1999). From this time on, a strong collective and regional identity developed among the Arab population, with the remaining “foreign” Indian migrants as the main comparator.

The political and social policies of the present day United Arab Emirates (UAE) take on a new significance when viewed against this early picture of the pearling industry. Indeed, as the Arab groups or Emiratis, moved toward amalgamation in 1971, there was a lingering history of migrant Indians entering the area, exercising financial and political power and leaving as the economy declined.

*British oversight.* Due to the small population and scarce resources of the Trucial States, early British involvement was mainly limited to patrolling the coastal waters to ensure the safe passage of British East India Company ships that were frequently the target of pirate raids. With the growth of the pearling industry in the 1850’s, the British took a more active role in the region, although they still had little settler or administrative presence. In 1853, the British stepped in to mediate between warring local groups, negotiating *The Perpetual Maritime Truce*. Beyond this, however, the British did not
formally colonize the Trucial States. There were no settlers, infrastructure, governance or social institutions established by the British.

In the 1950’s British presence increased for a brief period when troops were deployed to quell the animosity between local groups in Sharjah and Dubai. The British were hesitant to take extensive military action during this time, however, and instead began to develop more governance institutions such as the Trucial States’ Council and the Trucial States Development Office (Davidson, 2005). Until 1965 the Council was chaired by a British authority but eventually, in the lead up to independence, leadership began rotating among the heads of the seven Emirates. Overall, the British played the role of mediator and legitimatized the authority of the ruling Emirati families while complicating the relationship between the Arabs and the Indian migrant communities.

**Independence in 1971**  
By the late 1960’s the British had significantly decreased their military presence in the Trucial states and were intentionally working to support the independence process. Although various schemes for federation included other small Gulf countries such as Bahrain and Oman the final version included Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain.

Commentators at the time were sceptical that the federation would succeed since the Emirati ruling elites had a somewhat turbulent history of inter-family conflict (Abdulla, 1978). Furthermore, the British-established institutions were new and the economy was funded by a single-resource that did not seem sustainable. Nevertheless, the UAE has seen incredible growth and has developed a unity among the local population that sets it apart in the Middle East/Gulf Region. The vision of the UAE’s first president and leader for 33 years, H.H. Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan, is often credited with fusing the Emirates together. Ghubash (1997) suggests that the incredible oil wealth of Abu Dhabi and Sheikh Al Nahayan’s commitment to income redistribution were the solidifying forces of the federation. Although federation meant a decrease in autonomous power for Emirate ruling elites, many had experienced decreasing resources and were willing to trade their autonomy for the financial benefits of the union. Al Nahayan was strongly committed to social development for the Emirates and instigated numerous projects in the areas of health and education to develop the country.
1990 – 2014: Growth in All Areas

Economic strength: Decreasing oil dependence. Since independence the UAE has seen incredible economic growth. The country benefited dramatically from the 1973 increase in oil prices and the new federation had seemingly unlimited resources for social and economic development. By the 1990’s the UAE was second only to Saudi Arabia in oil reserves with almost 10% of the world’s supply (Shihab, 1997). Although it was estimated that the oil reserves would last until the year 2120, the UAE government has been very cognisant that the country needs to decrease its oil dependency to ensure long-term sustainability. To this end, significant efforts have been made to develop an economic hub, capitalizing on the country’s central location between Europe, Asia and Africa.

Political structures. The political structure of the UAE has two governing bodies: the Supreme Council of Rulers and the Council of Ministers. The former, comprised of the heads of the seven Emirates, holds the most power and is led by the president. The latter is the legislature and its members include selected representatives of the seven Emirates. The country’s top authority is the president who is the head of state and the UAE’s main actor in international relations. Since independence, the president has been from Abu Dhabi’s ruling family. In general, the balance of power in both levels of the government lies in favour of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, as the Emirates with the largest populations. The non-democratic, communal nature of politics in the UAE can be seen as a natural outcome of clan-based power structures that have guided the region for centuries (Davidson, 2008).

Migration and ethnic divisions. The wealth of the UAE has made it an attractive destination choice for expatriate workers. Approximately 7.8 million foreign workers were residing in the UAE in 2013. This makes the UAE the fifth largest receiver of migrants in the world following the USA, Russia, Germany, and Saudi Arabia (OECD, 2014). The majority of foreign workers, however, are low-wage workers and domestic labourers coming from South Asia, Egypt and the Philippines. Significant controversy has surrounded these low-wage workers as they are often victims of serious human rights abuses. For example, domestic workers have little legal recourse if mistreated in the homes of their employers.
Social divisions are noticeable and perpetuated in almost all spheres of economic life in the UAE. Expatriate workers from Western countries receive on average 40.5% higher salaries than workers from Asian countries (Pant, 2012). This type of salary difference is typically linked to workers’ nationality. Types of jobs are also sharply delineated along national or ethnic lines with skilled workers from OECD countries working in high-wage areas such as, “oil and gas, education, finance and investments sectors,” while the low-wage migrants noted above work as laborers or domestic servants (Malit Jr. & Al Youha, 2013, p.1).

Expatriate workers must have a valid work permit to enter the country. Expatriates who make a certain level of salary may have their families join them on their work visa (Dh 4000 or USD 1000/month in 2014). These rules are to ensure that long-term expatriates in the country are financially secure; however, they leave no opportunity for expatriates to gain citizenship. With the low ratio of Emirati to expatriates, there have recently been numerous discussions on whether expatriates should be naturalized. Although there is currently no means of naturalization for expatriates, President Shaikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan altered the immigration laws in 2011 for Emirati women who had married foreigners. Under the new rules, their children can qualify for citizenship and approximately 1000 were naturalized by 2012. Debates about Emirati identity are central to the discourse on expatriates gaining citizenship (Al Qassimi, 2013). Since the Emirati groups are the minority in their own country, some suggest that their particular cultural identity would diminish if expatriates gained citizenship.

The UAE’s South Asian expatriates have long been the largest group in the country. Particularly in Dubai certain urban neighbourhoods have a “ubiquity of Indian languages, food, commodities and social groups,” (Vora, 2013, p.153). These areas have been established by long-time expatriate families.
with a certain level of wealth who have held strongly to their Indian culture. The children of many of these middle-class migrants attend university at international branch-campuses.

**Emiratisation**

One of the most pressing labour concerns for the UAE government is the underrepresentation of UAE citizens in the workforce. Many of the countries in the Arab Gulf face a similar challenge, but the UAE and Qatar have, by far, the lowest percentage of citizens in the workforce. Over the last decade, attempts have been made to nationalize the labour force in the UAE, a process known as *emiratisation*. Randeer (2012) suggests that successful emiratisation requires new forms of education, with more efficient knowledge transfers from expatriates to citizens. Furthermore, UAE citizens should begin to work in private sector and more women enter the work force.

**Dubai**

It is important to highlight the distinct position of Dubai among the Emirates. Like the other Emirates Dubai is a constitutional monarchy. It has been ruled by the same leading family, Al Maktoum, since 1833. Unlike other Emirates, however, Dubai has fashioned itself as a cosmopolitan city with relaxed laws about drinking and clothing. In 2005, the *Dubai Strategic Plan 2015* set development targets for the following decade in areas such as trade, finance and tourism (Fox & Al Shamisi, 2014). Numerous free zones were built throughout the city to develop industry clusters in fields such as finance, insurance and logistics which are seen to contribute to the knowledge economy. Despite some debate on the UAE as a rentier state – gaining profits with little work - Dubai has continued to grow in its position as an economic centre and is the world’s third largest re-export hub transiting goods around the region.

**Summary**

As a political entity, the UAE’s defining feature is its balance between rapid modernization and traditional political structures. As a social entity, the UAE is defined by its distinct population: an expatriate majority and an Emirati minority, both of which straddle, at different times and in different ways, the divide between modern and traditional social structures.

The concept of identity as it relates to social boundaries (Chapter Three) is central to the UAE’s daily operations. Emirati citizens are afforded significant privilege and live almost cloistered lives while expatriates are sorted by their national identities into particular employment and salary categories. South Asian expatriates contribute significantly to the country’s economy while often holding low social standing. At the same time, a wealthy minority of long-term South Asians have prospered in the
Higher Education and the UAE

The wealth of any nation is its intellectuals and the progress of peoples and nations is judged by the level and extent of education they reach,


Education has long been an important value advanced by the leadership of the United Arab Emirates. Significant state funding has gone toward public education at all levels and toward creating favourable conditions for private providers to educate the expatriate community. In recent years, with the desire to decrease oil dependency and to establish itself as an economic hub, the UAE has prioritized higher education as a service industry that can generate revenue. Large numbers of foreign programs and providers have entered the country and the UAE boasts the most IBCs of any nation. However, the burgeoning higher education sector is directly linked to the distinctions between ethnic groups in the country, servicing the large expatriate communities who have no access to public higher education.

At the time of federation in 1971 there was no university in the UAE. The first institute of higher education, UAE University, was created by the government in 1977. This remained the sole public institution until 1988 when the multi-campus Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) were developed to provide vocational and technical training. In 1998 the third public higher education institution, Zayed University, opened with campuses in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. These public institutions are almost exclusively for Emirate citizens who attend free of cost provided they meet the admissions standards. They have been well funded, with state-of-the-art facilities and international faculty, although funding has plateaued in recent years (Fox, 2007). Despite the relatively small constituency for these institutions they remain unable to meet the increasing demand of Emirate citizens for degrees. To make up for this shortfall, the UAE government has a generous scholarship program enabling citizens to study abroad (Shihab, 1997). In spite of this, almost one third of the college-age cohort attends private institutions within the UAE (KHDA, 2014). These private institutions attended by Emirati citizens however are rarely international branch-campuses, as Figure 9 illustrates. Most Emirati students attend either federal institutions or local private institutions. Only 5% attend international universities such as branch-campuses (KHDA 2013/2014).
With the public institutions servicing only Emirate citizens, the UAE’s large expatriate community and a number of Emiratis look to private providers for their degrees. The main division when considering private institutions is between those that are owned locally and those that are owned by overseas institutions, often in the form of a branch-campus (Wilkins, 2010). This distinction of ownership is important since several of the popular local institutions have names that suggest they are foreign. For example the American University of Dubai is a locally owned private institution despite its name. In contrast, institutions such as Herriot Watt University or Manipal University are subsidiaries of home campuses located outside of Dubai and fit Lane’s definition of an international branch-campus (IBC) (see Chapter Two).

Both short and longer-term expatriates in the UAE constitute the largest group attending international private higher education in the UAE. Expatriates must hold work visas and parents can only sponsor their sons under their own work visa and only until they reach the age of 18. Enrolling in higher education provides young men with a student visa and provides a means to remain in the UAE with their families (Vora, 2013). The rules are different for women, who are allowed to stay in the UAE as a dependent on their father’s visa after they turn 18.
Language

English is the main language of instruction at private higher education institutions in the UAE. While there are several private secondary schools that offer instruction in Arabic or particular South Asian languages, English is the lingua franca for the large, diverse expatriate community and students’ English ability is very advanced by the time they reach university. However, the prestigious status of the Emirati and Arab Gulf communities, continues to place a value on Arabic and several students in this study indicated that they were attempting to learn Arabic to improve their employment opportunities.

Cross-Border Higher Education

The UAE has the largest number of international branch-campuses of any country in the world with 33 operating in 2015 (C-BERT, 2015). The government has created a favourable environment for IBCs with flexible regulation, minimal taxes and pre-constructed infrastructure. This is to advance the broader goals of educating the expatriate work force and developing a hub of higher education.

One challenge of having so many providers is the heightened competition it brings to recruit students, (Wilkins, 2010). This has led to the closing of several branch-campuses and the perception that international university ventures are a risky investment for the home campus. Another concern for IBCs is the emiratisation process. Despite being private enterprises, Wilkins (2010) suggests that IBCs may be forced to hire a quota of local employees as emiratisation increases in importance. The emiratisation process has placed professional limits on expatriate professors who are not eligible for tenure and promotion to the same extent as their local colleagues (Austin, Chapman, Farah, Wilson & Ridge, 2014). Despite recruitment challenges and difficulties related to quality and financing, new international programs continue to be established in the UAE.

The students who attend branch-campuses in the UAE tend to be divided between a) the children of long-time expatriate workers and b) mobile students who have relocated specifically for higher education. Wilkins (2011) suggests that “In the UAE, expatriates typically account for at least three quarters of total enrolments at branch campuses. The remaining students are either UAE nationals or international students from outside the UAE,” (34).

Several of the students who participated in this study suggested they were unable attend the local private institutions, stating these were either too expensive or catered more to wealthy Arab expatriates from neighbouring countries. This suggests that some branch-campuses hold a third-tier position, with the exclusive national universities at the top, private local institutions in the middle and
branch-campuses following below. Other smaller private providers as well as IBCs from non-Western locations, would definitely fall below this. Branch-campuses in the UAE do not hold the prestige they do in Malaysia, as the following section outlines. It is important to note that this chart below only reflects students’ perception of campus prestige as indicated in their interviews and is not linked to international campus rankings.

Table 4: Prestige of UAE Institutions According to Students’ Perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prestige of UAE Institutions</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1</td>
<td>Public Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
<td>Wealthy Local Private (UAS, UAD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
<td>IBCs from Western, Anglophone nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 4</td>
<td>Other IBCs or smaller private institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dubai is by far the leading Emirate for attracting international branch-campuses and for growing higher education as a service sector. With the Dubai Strategic Plan 2015, two major education free zones were created in the city: Knowledge Village and Dubai International Academic City (DIAC). These education zones provide campus infrastructure for foreign institutions, significantly decreasing the investment these require to set up programs in Dubai. As a result Dubai had 25 branch-campuses in 2012 (OBHE 2012). This thesis focuses exclusively on the Emirate of Dubai and the experiences of students at two of its IBCs.

While the broader historical context of the UAE has been significant in determining federal policy regarding minority groups, Dubai is distinct in its development trajectory, particularly in relation to higher education. As Davidson (2008) and Lane (2010) argue, Dubai “has ensured that it retains a distinct national identity, controls its own natural resources, and maintains command of its largely independent development path” (Davidson, 2008, p. 2) and, “its innovation in the development of IBCs warrants attention separate from the rest of the Emirates,” (Lane, 2010, p. 371).

\[2\] The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) defines branch-campus slightly differently than Dubai’s Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) which counts 29 international branch-campuses.
Malaysia

Malaysia is a country of approximately 30 million people (IndexMundi, 2014). It is comprised of West and East Malaysia, two landmasses separated by the South China Sea. West Malaysia houses 80% of the population in 11 states. It is also home to the capital city of Kuala Lumpur and both of the former colonial capitals, Melaka and Penang. East Malaysia, in contrast, has a small population, a large number of indigenous people and plentiful natural resources. It is made up of two states: Sabah and Sarawak.

Figure 10: Map of Malaysia (Australian National University, 2015)

1300-1511: Early History

Unlike the UAE, modern day Malaysia follows hundreds of years of wealthy civilizations, strategic international alliances and multiple forms of European colonialism. In fact, the current nation-state represents a tiny fraction of the political and cultural history that has defined the peninsula since the 13th Century. Themes in Malaysia’s current society mirror many of the dynamics of the past including: the diverse mix of ethnic groups; the primacy of Islam and ethnic Malays; the importance of China – both the Chinese residents and Malaysia’s geo-political alliance with the Chinese empire; and finally, the shifting influence of Western politics, business values and education.
Although the Malay peninsula has been home to multiple rulers and regimes, many historians pinpoint the rule of Parameswara in the early 1400’s as the era that established a cohesive and politically significant kingdom in the region (Daniels, 2005). The port-town of Melaka was the centre of Parameswara’s rule. Melaka was well positioned on the trade routes between India and China, and became a strategic port, changing hands repeatedly during its prime.

Parameswara’s reign was significant in constructing many of the identity traits associated with contemporary ethnic Malays such as language, religion and family structure. It is seen as the golden era of Malay civilization and lends authenticity to the claim that Malays have a special position in Malaysian society (Daniels, 2005). Under Parameswara’s influence, Islam became the main religion of the region and Melaka was established as the centre of Islamic proselytising. Islam has remained the dominant religion in Malaysia despite the European colonial influence.

In ancient Melaka, like today, the Muslim Malay majority co-existed with a diverse mix of other ethnic groups. From the 15th Century the city of Melaka housed laborers and merchant immigrants from neighbouring continents including, “Indian-Hindus, Persians, Javanese and Chinese,” (Daniels, 2005, p. 22). The complexity of co-existing diverse groups parallels the dynamics of modern day Malaysia: division amid co-existence. Despite regular economic interactions between the diverse groups in their daily business, Melaka was divided into ethnic neighbourhoods and certain jobs were more likely to be held by certain ethnic groups.

1511-1957 Colonial Rule: Portuguese, Dutch and British Influences

By the 16th Century the prosperity of Melaka had attracted European colonial powers. Melaka was conquered by the Portuguese in 1511. They ruled for 100 years followed by a decades-long skirmish with the Dutch who eventually took leadership in 1641. In 1826, the British acquired Melaka from the Dutch through a treaty rather than a battle. The British moved the centre of colonial rule north to Penang, though Melaka still remained an important city for trade and commerce. The British ruled the peninsula until independence in 1957, excluding the three years (1941-1944) of World War II when the Japanese were in control.

Each colonial power took a different approach in their interactions with the diverse ethnic groups of the region. The Portuguese made efforts to establish Catholicism as the leading religion and to spread European culture through settler migration. The Portuguese effort even involved inter-
marriage and evidence of their rule is still seen in some of the names and architecture of Melaka. In contrast, the Dutch attempted to remain a separate and elite ruling class that frowned upon intermarriage (Daniels, 2005). They did, however, exercise influence over the way in which other ethnicities in Melaka interacted. The Chinese were valued by the Dutch as hard-working labourers and held more positions of influence during the Dutch rule than other ethnic groups. With British rule came the establishment of social institutions such as education. British attitudes towards the diverse ethnic groups were evident in the schools. They rarely allowed Malay students to attend British-run schools whereas Chinese and Indian elites regularly attended, (Daniels, 2005). During the British rule, particularly from 1860-1940, Malaysia experienced large population growth from immigration, mainly from Southern China. Throughout the three colonial eras, ethnic identities remained strong as each ruling power prioritized particular groups.

1957 Independence: Multiculturalism and Special Status

During World War II the Japanese occupied Malaysia for three years. When the British regained power at the end of the war, pressure for Malaysian independence was strong. Richter and Nguyen (2004) suggest that the Japanese take-over led to a new scepticism about European colonialism and new awareness that Malaysians could rule themselves. Subsequently, Malaysia gained formal independence from the British on August 31, 1957.

However, the question of who was Malaysian and should have citizenship in the new country was complex and was debated passionately in the lead-up to independence. The British played a planning and mediating role between the various groups. The first scenario offered by the British in 1946 was the Malaysian Union Scheme. The Scheme essentially granted equal citizenship, representation and rights to all long-term residents of Malaysia regardless of ethnicity. However, after strong opposition from the main Malay ethnic lobby, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Scheme was repealed in 1948. In response to the Malay lobby, the final plan for independence, the Bargain, upheld the special position of ethnic Malays, while granting citizenship to only one-third of the non-Malay population.

During this time the term Bumiputra was coined referring to the ethnic Malay and the indigenous populations, both of whom had historic claims of residence in the region. The four tenets of Malay or Bumiputra privilege were outlined in the 1957 constitution: a) leadership by Malay ruling families, b) Malay as the national language, c) Islam as the “religion of the federation,” and d) special
Malay privileges in housing, education and the civil service, (Constitution 1957 as quoted in Richter & Nguyen, 2004). At the time of independence, of the 5.2 million people who were granted citizenship, 2.2 million were Malay and 3 million were not (Indian, Chinese and others) (Kheng, 2002). The close number of Malay and non-Malay citizens has shaped the political scene of Malaysia and made ethnic identity a recurring discourse at the centre of each election. These numbers would be altered somewhat in the following decade as Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia) were added to the union and Singapore was expelled in 1963. Scholars have viewed the addition and subtraction of these regions through the lens of identity politics (Kheng, 2002). Sabah and Sarawak increased the Bumiputera population while Singapore’s removal decreased the number of ethnic Chinese. In the 70 years since Malaysian independence the privileged Bumiputera population has never exceeded 60% of the whole.

Malaysians of Chinese descent have been at the centre of political discourse on ethnic unity since before independence. Although the leading Chinese groups supported federation and worked within the British systems of commerce and politics, a small faction of Chinese, under the Malayan Community Party, were instrumental in waging an insurgency against the British during the period following World War II. Subsequently, there have been two recurring discourses about the Chinese, one criticizing them for dominating the economy and the other suggesting they are politically subversive.

Since independence Malaysia has been governed by the same political party, Parti Perikatan, renamed Barisan Nasional (National Front, BN) in 1973. This party is a coalition of three ethnic-based groups including United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). UMNO has been the strongest voice and actor in the coalition and was the driver behind many of the Malay-centric policies that emerged in the 1970’s and 80’s.

By 1967, only a decade after independence, significant unrest was building in Malaysia between the diverse ethnic groups. Although a policy of Malaysianization had replaced many of the British civil servants with Malaysian citizens, the majority were still from Chinese or Indian ethnic groups. This was seen as negating the constitutional Bargain and the special privilege of the Malays (Kheng, 2002). In 1967 the Language Act was passed to enforce the constitutional position of Malay as the official
language. Institutions such as schools were forced to transition to Malay exclusively, although universities did not follow suit until 1983 (Ee, 1988).

In 1969 following the general elections, violent rioting broke out between Malay and Chinese groups resulting in hundreds of deaths and a state of emergency lasting two years (Richter & Nguyen, 2004). This event is viewed by most historians as a foundational moment in Malaysian history on which the policies of the next two decades were built (Enloe, 1970; Lee, 2004). With the election of Tun Abdul Razak in 1970, a strong imperative emerged to address the marginalized position of the Malay majority, for although the Malay ruling families were officially the elite of the country, Malays were still seriously under-represented in the civil service, higher education and the business sector. Post-1970 affirmative action policies established new quotas holding the majority of civil servant and university spaces for ethnic Malays. The main political means to achieve equity between the ethnic groups was the New Economic Policy (NEP) introduced in 1971, “a 20-year plan aimed at bringing about an economic balance between Malays, the ethnic Chinese and others,” (Richter & Nguyen, 2004, p.5). With the election of Mahathir bin Mohamad in 1981, the NEP was the guiding policy for the next few decades. Despite these measures, the advancement of ethnic Malays has remained questionable. Non-Malays still hold many positions in science, university professions and the civil service, as well owning significant amounts of wealth in the corporate sphere (Kheng, 2002).

During the rule of Mahathir, a new discourse on Malaysian identity began to emerge. While much of the identity rhetoric from the country’s politicians had centred on internal divisions between groups, Mahathir’s Look East Policy broadened notions of identity to include Asian regionalism. Nations such as Japan and Korea became models of development and the idea of Asian values emerged including, “family, community, respect for authority, social harmony and freedom of expression,” (Richter & Nguyen, 2004, p.4).

Several scholars view Malaysia with its initial Bargain and subsequent affirmative action policies, as an impressive example of a multicultural federation that has succeeded in spite of significant divides along ethnic identity lines (Case, 1996; Daniels, 2005). Enloe (1970) suggests that the minority groups (Chinese and Indian) were able to accept the special position of the Malays because their economic power was untouched. Richter & Nguyen (2004) also agree that the stability of the Bargain rested on agreement that the “ethnic Chinese were to run the economy and the Malays politics,” (p. 3). For Tun Razak, affirmative action initiatives of the New Economic Policy were essential to guarantee social stability which was threatened by the economic disparity between the Malays and Chinese. Indeed, the
strength of the economy, which grew rapidly after 1970, can be viewed as a central component fusing
together the diverse groups and preventing further violence in the country. At the same time,
Malaysia’s multicultural federation is in a state of continual negotiation pertaining to the political and
economic roles of the distinct ethnic groups. Tension between groups regularly resurfaces in national
discourse suggesting that while impressive, the federation’s multi-cultural policy still faces many
challenges.

1991-2013: Growing Economy and Hope for National Unity
Since the 1990’s Malaysia has been noted for its strong economic growth, growing middle class and,
more recently, its shifting political atmosphere. In the 1990’s hope began to grow that Malaysia’s ethnic
groups would leave their sectarian divisions in favour of a unified national identity. In 1991, Malaysia’s
long-standing ruler Mahathir bin Mohamad drafted Vision 2020, an economic plan undergirded by a
desire for a national “common sense of shared destiny,” (Kheng, 2002, p. 52). This was well accepted by
the public, although by the end of his rule in 2003, little actual policy had been changed toward
decreasing the Bumiputera privilege.

Economic growth. Malaysia’s economy has grown impressively since the 1970’s. The main
industries are manufacturing, primary exports and more recently, increased tourism. From 2004-2010
Malaysia’s economy grew at an average annual rate of 5.3%, with an increase to 6.7% in 2007 (Li, et al.,
2013). This growth puts Malaysia close to the targets for development outlined in Vision 2020.

Islam. The importance of Islam in Malaysia is evident in its dual legal system and the continual
struggle between religious groups for public spaces. Its influence is perhaps most noticeable in the legal
sector, though here again, Malaysia’s policies of co-existence are very apparent. Under the current
legal system, there are two tiers, one at the national level for criminal cases and another at the state
level for domestic cases. Within each level, two streams exist: civil law for non-Muslims and Islamic law
for Muslims (Daniel, 2005). Although Islam is institutionalized in the main governing structure of the
legal system, those who are non-Muslim are not particularly affected by it. In other areas such as
education and business, the situation is similar: Islam for Muslims. The dominance of Islam becomes an
area of tension when it conflicts with other religions. The government has repeatedly suppressed
proselytising by other faiths and conversion of Muslim Malays to other religions, but the government
position on this fluctuates in response to criticism, particularly in fragile election times.
Political change. In the 2008 elections the leading party, Barisan Nasional (BN), maintained its position of power but lost their three-quarters legislative majority. This current of political change continued into the 2013 elections when the opposition party, Pakatan Rakyat (People’s Alliance, PR) won 51% of the popular vote although they lost the legislature. This led to accusations of electoral fraud against BN and to concerns that little was being done to improve political transparency.

Most relevant to this thesis is the popularity of the opposition party PR with its multi-ethnic makeup and platform. The PR is a coalition of the People’s Justice Party (PKR), Democratic Action Party (DAP), and Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). It represents a distinct change from the ethnically-divided politics that has defined Malaysia. Scholars suggest PR’s success signals a new era in Malaysian politics in which the public is less interested in the ethnic-based discourses of BN (O’Shannassy, 2011).

Summary
Malaysia is a complex and fluctuating federation of diverse groups and, in many ways, an incredible example of co-existence amid diversity. Politically, there is a fragile balance that must be continually maintained between ethnic groups. Socially, different groups and their respective beliefs have been compartmentalized through dual legal and educational systems. The growth of the economy is lauded by some as ensuring national unity while others point to the potential for unrest if certain groups are excluded from economic prosperity. In each area questions of identity are pivotal to national policies and public responses; higher education is no exception.

Higher Education and Malaysia

...Education has been the policy area which has constantly provoked the most controversy among the political elites and sub-elites of the three ethnic communities,
(Enloe, 1970, p. 373).

Education has been at the centre of political discourse and debate since Malaysian independence. In the years preceding independence, leading parties agreed to set aside the debates on education until after the Bargain had been formalized for fear these debates would disrupt plans for the federation (Kheng, 2002). The position of the various ethnic groups regarding language of instruction and future opportunities are recurring issues in these debates. Universities have been one of the highly contested sites. While ethnic-based primary education has been seen by some as threatening Malaysian unity by preserving divisions between diverse groups, universities have been seen as a unifying solution,
providing equal advantage for marginalized groups, thus decreasing their potential for unrest. As Malaysian politics has shifted, higher education has reacted and responded to the competing interests that shape the country.

The first universities on the Malay Peninsula are often cited to be King Edward VII College of Medicine (1905) and Raffles College (1929). However, both were initially located in present day Singapore and serviced a small elite in the British service. By 1949 these institutions merged into the University of Malaya, still located in present day Singapore. After independence an autonomous campus of the University of Malaya was established in Kuala Lumpur in 1959, becoming the first multidisciplinary institution in the new nation-state of Malaysia (Lee, 2004).

Between 1969 and 1972 four more public universities were founded in Malaysia. These institutions were influenced by the political structures and ethnic-politics of the time. A significant influence was the quota system ensuring university positions for ethnic-Malay students. This policy was created in reaction to the 1969 race riots and was aimed at raising the socio-economic position of the ethnic-Malays (Lee, 2004). In 1970, fully three-quarters of the student population at the University of Malaya was non-Malay although Malays at the time made up 49% of the country’s population. With the quota system, universities were required to ensure 55% of their positions were for Bumiputera students. The quota system was implemented successfully and by 1985 63% of students at public universities in Malaysia were Bumiputera (Lee, 2004). The quota system also resulted in increased government oversight of higher education. Although most institutions were set up to be autonomous, the government admission quotas under the New Economic Policy entrenched the government as a major decision-maker and authority in university affairs.

The quota system had significant ramifications in the following decades as well. The 1980’s saw little growth in the university sector with only two new universities opening during this time. The growing middle class and their increasing demand for higher education, alongside the quotas at the public universities, led to significant brain-drain among Chinese-Malaysians. In the mid-1990’s it was estimated that Malaysia was educating 28000 students at the country’s public universities while 35000 students left the country to study elsewhere (Altbach, 1985). Three forces combined to change this trend in the 1990’s. First, in an attempt to increase access to higher education for domestic students, the government loosened its regulations on private providers in the 1996 Education Act. This allowed more private providers to establish programs and as a result, nine private universities and five branch-campuses were opened in the 1990’s. Second, there was strong political pressure for more spaces in
public universities. New public universities opened up in every state to meet the needs of diverse populations around the country increasing capacity overall. Finally, the economic collapse of 1998 decreased the strength of the Malaysian currency outside its borders and resulted in fewer students having the ability to travel abroad for higher education.

By the early 2000’s, Malaysia’s expanded higher education system began to reflect shifting political attitudes including the government’s more lenient approach to ethnic education. By 2003 English was again being used as the language of instruction for science and math in public universities. More striking however, was the creation of the University of Tun Abdul Razak (UTAR). This university is owned by the political party Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and was created to meet the needs of the growing ethnic-Chinese middle class. The establishment of this institution reflects a significant shift in ethnic politics and the growing importance attributed to higher education. In 1970 a proposal for a Chinese-language university had been presented by MCA members, but was rejected. Enloe (1970) highlights this proposal as a major policy debate in the 1960’s national focus on advanced learning and economic development. She suggests that the rejection of the 1970 plan was evidence of the growing prioritization of the economy over ethnic divides. The MCA leadership was concerned that a Chinese university had, “inherent risks in a tenuously united multi-ethnic society,” (Enloe, 1970, p. 382). In contrast to the proposed institution of 1970, UTAR’s programs are offered entirely in English, although the student body is mainly Chinese-Malaysian. In many ways the creation of MCA-owned UTAR, almost forty years later, provides insight into the current ambivalence of Malaysian politics and higher education. On one hand, policies that entrench Malay privilege are still in practice, limiting minority participation in public higher education and continuing the ethnic divisions that motivate ethnic-based institutions like UTAR. On the other hand, government liberalization and the calming of ethnic relations allow the presence of UTAR without the friction anticipated by MCA in the 1970’s. Moreover, the rise of English as a global business language has also been accepted in Malaysia in ways that were not possible forty years ago.

The creation of UTAR also speaks to the continued importance of the Malaysian-Chinese minority to Malay politics and education. The ethnic Chinese have been the main comparator group to the Bumiputeras. Although many Malaysian-Chinese attend public primary and secondary schools, a segment of the Chinese minority has continued to promote and populate Independent Chinese Schools (ICS). These schools operate in Chinese and are governed by the United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia (UCSCAM) which exercises control over curriculum and examinations (Ee,1988).
The students who attend these schools are not contestants for public universities since they have not attended public institutions. Instead they turn to private local and foreign institutions for their degrees. In the research for this thesis, many participants referenced the ICS system, comparing it with their experience at the Western branch-campus.

Current Situation

In 2015 Malaysia had 20 universities, 34 polytechnics and 94 community colleges in the public sector (Tapsir, 2016). Tables five and six show how this compares with 111 universities and university-colleges, 4 IBCs and approximately 402 smaller colleges in the private sector (Tapsir, 2016). The private sector has become increasingly important in meeting the demand for higher education for both the ethnic minorities and the Bumiputera who do not gain entrance into the public universities.

Table 5: Malaysia’s public higher education institutions: Number of institutions by type and enrollment. (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2011; 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Institutions</th>
<th># of Institutions</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>560,359³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polytechnics</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>89292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Colleges</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>655970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Malaysia’s private higher education institutions: Number of institutions by type and enrollment (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Institutions</th>
<th># of Institutions</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>202714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University-Colleges</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBCs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>177501</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ Statistics are available for public universities from 2014 The Ministry of Higher Education statistics report. However, all other number are taken from the 2011 Ministry of Higher Education statistics report.
Language
Closely related to the debates on education is the question of what language is used for instruction in schools and universities. Although the main language of instruction in public primary and secondary schools is Malay, English is taught as a core subject. Public universities use a combination of Malay and English. Despite its strong affiliation with the Chinese lobby group MCA, UTAR on the other hand, operates in English. The overall trend across institutions is towards increasing use of English in higher levels of education. Yet the polarization of the ethnic communities, and their exclusive language policies, has led to a big disparity in the English language abilities of students by the time they reach post-secondary education.

Cross-border Higher Education
Since the early 2000’s Malaysia’s education policy documents have repeatedly set the goal of establishing Malaysia as a higher education hub, bringing together both local and foreign students and providers (Lee, 2014). This plan is being realized and a variety of branch-campuses, twinning and franchising arrangements exist throughout the country.

A significant change for Malaysia is its new position as a destination for international students. Attracting international students to Malaysia is a key policy goal of the government. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has set a target of attracting 200,000 international students by 2020. In 2012 it was estimated that 93,000 international students were registered at institutions within Malaysia (ICEF Monitor, 2012). This is in sharp contrast to the brain-drain of the 1980’s. The major sending countries of international students to Malaysia are Indonesia, China and Iran though reports suggest that increasing numbers of students from the Middle East have chosen Malaysia since the Arab Spring (Sidhu & Christie, 2014; Sharma, 2014). Malaysia’s public universities take only 5% of incoming undergraduate students; the rest enroll in the rapidly expanding private sector (Yee & Mokhtar, 2013).

International Branch-campuses
In Malaysia, in contrast to the UAE, branch-campuses hold a relatively prestigious position, especially well established branch-campuses with notable international rankings such as Nottingham or Monash Universities. Students noted in their interviews, that the quota system of the public institutions has led to a perception of decreasing quality since students are not admitted strictly on merit. Thus students
perceive that public institutions do not have the best of Malaysian university students. Likewise, the ethnic-based universities, such as UTAR, only cater to a certain segment of the population and were criticized as too culturally narrow by the students in this study. In contrast, the larger branch-campuses with their high tuition fees and strict, merit-based enrollment are considered of high quality by context informants in this study.

Table 7: Prestige of Malaysian Institutions According to Students’ Perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prestige of Malaysian Institutions</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1</td>
<td>International Branch-campuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
<td>Public Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
<td>Ethnic-Based Universities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This trend in Malaysia is similar to that observed by Neave (2001): “Thus, the ‘non-state sector’ today enjoys an unprecedented legitimacy both as “pace-maker” as a source of innovative “good practice” and as competitor to a supposedly archaic state university,” (p. 61).

Comparing the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia

The UAE’s brief history of nationhood out of nothing and Malaysia’s long history of kingdoms, conquerors and co-existence are the contexts in which international branch-campuses and their students interact. There are several similarities but also distinct differences between the countries which have greatly influenced the development of higher education in each location.

Similarities

The UAE and Malaysia have core similarities that make them compatible comparison contexts in which to explore the influence of cross-border higher education on students’ identities: they are both Islamic nations with economically-affluent minority groups who attend IBCs to achieve economic, rather than political agency. Education and language have been contested issues in both countries as governments attempt to control these in order to create and perpetuate national identity for particular groups. The result in both countries has been a compartmentalizing of ethnic groups around certain educational institutions and languages. This is most pronounced in primary and secondary education in the UAE, while in Malaysia it is a moderate trend at all levels and keenly felt in public higher education.
The UAE and Malaysia have both seen incredible economic growth in the past three decades. Each aims to be a significant player in world economics and both have prioritized the long-term stability of their economies. Social stability is also a shared goal. Both countries wish to be examples of progressive, moderate and peaceful Islamic states, challenging suggestions that the Islamic world is being left behind (Gilmore, 2015). Politically, however, these countries differ significantly with Malaysia’s commitment to democracy a stark contrast to the UAE’s constitutional monarchy.

In both the UAE and Malaysia, the establishment of international branch-campuses, and of private higher education more broadly, has been a direct result of two main thrusts in government policy. First, the historic exclusion of certain groups from higher education based on nationality or ethnicity: in the UAE the large expatriate population and in Malaysia the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups. These marginalized groups have a growing middle class that highly values education and provides the demand for foreign degrees. The second policy area is the country’s efforts to be an education hub. This more recent development has opened both countries to foreign providers and foreign students. The former policy area is more explicitly related to issues of identity since the majority of students attending branch-campuses in both nations come from outside the privileged groups that have access to public education. Furthermore, both countries are intent on recruiting international students and draw large numbers from their surrounding region and from other nations with Islamic ties.

Both UAE and Malaysia have two distinct higher education sectors with distinct roles: public and private. In the regulations that govern who has access to public universities, specific groups are included or excluded. Thus, higher education policy in the public sphere is closely linked to issues of concern over national identity: who belongs to the nation and who should be served by state institution. In contrast, the private universities, which include CBHE programs, exist mainly to support the economy by educating the peripheral populations and ensuring skilled labour. While the very existence of a large private sector is a result of the regulations that exclude certain groups from public access, their actual programs are explicitly open to all groups, welcoming expatriate and Emirati, minorities and Bumiputera alike. Thus, private institutions sit in a tenuous space between identity politics and economic prosperity, in many ways filling the gap left by the former to ensure the success of the latter.
Differences

There are also several differences between the UAE and Malaysia that are important to consider when comparing them. First, a central difference is their concept of citizenship which clearly illuminates the relationship between identity politics and higher education. Malaysia’s requirements for citizenship are broader than the UAE’s with the result that the majority of the country’s residents hold citizenship. Therefore, of the students attending an IBC, 60% are Malaysian citizens. In contrast, Emirate citizens are a small minority in their own country and have sole access to prestigious public universities. Few attend IBCs and none participated in this study. In each country the different scope of citizenship contributes to very different public discourses on citizenship and identity as is evident in the following chapter.

These divergent approaches to citizenship have also led to opposite patterns of mobility in each country with direct implications for cross-border higher education. A clear example of this was seen in the way recent financial downturns impacted the higher education sector in each country. In the Malaysian context, before 1998 there was significant brain-drain with 35000 students leaving the country each year (Altbach, 1985). However, the East-Asian financial crisis of 1998 resulted in a decline of Malaysia’s currency and Malaysian youth were forced to stay in the country for tertiary education. Thus the regional economic collapse led to growth in Malaysia’s higher education sector because Malaysians stayed home or came home.

In stark contrast, the recent economic recession of 2008 resulted in Dubai’s population dwindling as job insecurity led to a mass exodus of expatriates whose visas were contingent on employment. Subsequently, several IBCs were forced to close their doors as the student population fluctuated and expatriates went home to the countries in which they held citizenship. Though both the UAE and Malaysia faced a financial downturn, the impact on the higher education sector was very different in each context due to the differences in citizenship policies. Malaysia’s more inclusive citizenship policies, combined with the favorable conditions for foreign tertiary providers, allowed the higher education sector to flourish despite the economic downturn. In contrast the UAE’s foreign tertiary providers had little hope of outlasting a recession in which non-nationals were required to exit the country. Although the development of a higher education hub was anticipated to be one of the service sectors that would outlast the UAE oil moneys, without significant reforms to the citizenship policies that sector will not have the stability it needs to withstand the economic changes. These examples shows the hopeful potential in Malaysia’s “experiment” with multiculturalism (Ee, 1998) and
also how the identity politics in both countries has a substantial and recurrent impact on the higher education sectors.

**Conclusion**
This chapter has described the context in which IBCs exist in the UAE and Malaysia. They enroll large numbers of wealthy, politically peripheral students alongside international students from a variety of backgrounds. They fill a gap left by the exclusive and space-limited public system. Into this context providers bring Western curriculum and pedagogy, intended for young adults in the critical years of identity construction. The following chapters present the findings of this study, analysing how students enrolled at IBCs in these nations perceive their experiences as supporting or challenging their identities.
Chapter 6

Findings

The Western culture part is actually a big factor for me. I wouldn’t like to go to like an old Chinese community college. Or you know – somewhere that is very ethnic. I would like something that is very international that would voice out. Where you can hang around and mix with different types of people. It is so interesting. (Stephanie, Malaysian-Chinese Student)

Introduction

The UAE and Malaysia are Islamic countries in which multiple communities co-exist, constructing and re-constructing their diverse identities in relation to one another. Into this distinct context enter international branch-campuses (IBCs), enrolling young adults in their Western-based programs that emphasize group-based learning and leadership skills. The students who participated in this study were very aware of how their own identities were shifting as a result of their branch-campus experiences and were very eager to talk about these processes. This chapter tells their stories.

Chapters One through Four developed a rationale, conceptualized identity, and outlined the process of data collection and analysis for this research. Chapter Five presented the contexts of the UAE and Malaysia, the growing importance of higher education in both countries and the continued debates over national identity. This chapter presents the findings from in-depth interviews with 49 students at Australian and British IBCs in the UAE and Malaysia. It addresses the following research sub-questions:

What identities do students value?
Do students feel these identities are supported or challenged by their IBC experiences?
Does students’ time at university foster new, salient identities?

______________________________

4 The names of the all the student participants in this thesis have been replaced by pseudonyms.
Chapter Overview

The first section of this chapter provides demographic information on the student participants and situates them in relation to the broader social and political identities that were discussed in Chapter Five. Section two presents the identities that were most relevant to students’ lives before university, focusing on students’ citizenship, ethnicity and family. Section three explores how these valued identities are supported or challenged during their time at an IBC.

Five themes from the research data are presented including: the IBCs as identity-free, new identities, academic divisions, social divisions and invisible identities. These findings lead to three main conclusions about how students’ identities are influenced at an IBC: a) IBCs prioritize new identities related to students’ English language and leadership abilities, b) the academic and social divisions at IBCs sort students into regional or linguistic groups, and c) IBCs diminish important identities such as family and gender although these remain significant areas of tension in students’ home lives.

Section One: Demographic Background of the Interview Participants

A total of 51 students were interviewed in the UAE and Malaysia. However, two interview participants did not meet the criteria for interviewees, being too young and pursuing a degree other than business. The data from these two interviews was removed from the data analysis. The final result was usable data from 25 interviews from Dubai and 24 from Malaysia for a total of 49. A complete list of identity profiles for the 49 students can be found in Appendix B. The demographic information below was collected from students in the first part of each interview as they described and prioritized their identities. It is important to note that several students also added new identity categories to their own profile, but these are addressed in the themes of Section Three rather than the introductory demographic information below.

Gender

In both the UAE and Malaysia, approximately 60% of the interview participants were female and 40% were male (See Table 8).
Table 8: Distribution of Participants by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender was a very important identity for many of the female participants in Dubai, particularly those from South Asian or Arab backgrounds. Little discussion of gender was initiated by students in Malaysia or by male students in either location.

**Age**

Only students in the second or third year of their undergraduate degree were invited participate in interviews.

Table 9: Distribution of Participants by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the UAE, student ages ranged from 18 to 24 years old, the majority being between 19 and 22 years old. This was younger than the students in Malaysia where the majority of participants were between the ages of 21 and 23. In Dubai students are able to complete their high school programs earlier than in Malaysia. Although the IBCs do require a foundation or college year in each location, students are able to enter a year earlier in Dubai than in Malaysia due to their earlier completion of high school. Age was identified as an important identity by a small number of students, particularly those who were older than their peers and aware of their age, and some women in Dubai who noted that their increasing age was making them eligible for marriage.

**Family**

Family was selected as the most important identity by all the students. Half of the student participants in each location lived with their parents and all but two were supported financially by their parents.

Table 10: Distribution of Participants by Family Living Arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living Arrangement</th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lives with parent(s)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives with sibling(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives with husband/daughter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives away from family (within country)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives away from family (abroad)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 indicates that of the students who were not living with their parents, approximately 30% had moved to the country specifically for school and were living away from their families or with siblings. The remaining 15% had family that lived in country but were too far from them to live at home. In Dubai, where all the students held citizenship outside the UAE, these numbers indicate which students were recently mobile compared with long-time expatriates in the region. Apart from one, all of
the participants attending IBCs in Malaysia who held citizenship outside Malaysia were living away from their families having only moved to Malaysia for higher education.
Citizenship

Table 11 below shows the countries where students held citizenship.

Table 11: Distribution of Participants by Citizenship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emirate</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazak</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordanian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ugandan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the UAE none of the student-participants were Emirati citizens. Rather students were citizens of several neighbouring countries to the UAE or three held citizenship in Anglophone countries (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom). For the latter three students, their ethnicity was linked to a neighbouring country to the UAE (Iraq, Iran, Palestine) and their parents had moved to the UAE for work, but intended to retire in the Anglophone country where they held citizenship. In contrast to
Dubai, 66% of the participants in Malaysia were Malaysian citizens, though only one belonged to the Malay ethnic majority. The remaining 33% of students came from a range of countries, most of which were in the region.

**Ethnicity**

Particularly in the UAE, there was great diversity in the ethnic groups students identified with, as well as in their way of describing the ethnic groups. Table 12 shows the ethnic groups with which students identified.

Table 12: Distribution of Participants by Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghan/Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazak</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazak/Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Nigerian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peshawar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajistan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Dubai, many students defined their ethnicity as the place where their parents were born. When each parent came from a different place or ethnic group, students took time to describe their position in two groups. Table 12 uses a dividing line (slash) to indicate when students held more than one ethnicity. In Malaysia, the majority of students identified with one of the three main ethnic groups in the country: Malay, Chinese or Indian. Malaysian-Chinese students then took the extra step of identifying their linguistic group. The Palestinian students in Dubai, were very aware that their ethnicity did not match their citizenship; one held Jordanian citizenship and the other Australian. In Malaysia, almost 60% of the students identified as Chinese, though their country of birth was either Malaysia or Indonesia. This identity was very strong. Several students indicated that they spoke one of four languages/dialects associated with China (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien) but all identified ethnically as Chinese, rather than with the language they spoke.

**Religion**

Religion was identified by only four students as an important identity. Rather students spoke of the importance of having “faith” or believing that life has a purpose. As Mohit from Dubai stated: “It helps to have faith. It helps to have faith in something stronger than yourself.” Table 13 show the religions that students affiliate themselves with.

Table 13: Distribution of Interview Participants by Religion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim/Suni</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim/Christian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim/Shi’a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only one student from Dubai indicated her parents were each from different religions (Christian and Muslim) and she considered herself connected to both. Overall, students loosely identified themselves with a few mainstream religions. There were seven students who did not connect themselves with any religion. These students described family or personal journeys away from religion. Their peers however, had little narrative to add to their affiliation with a dominant religion and often stated that religion had little to do with university: “Religion is something that is someone’s own belief and it shouldn’t be a matter when it comes to work,” (Nadir, Dubai).

**Language**

Students spoke with pride about their agency in learning and using languages. Table 14 indicates the languages, apart from English, that students felt they could speak fluently.
Table 14: Distribution of Participants by Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Language(s)</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bhasa-Malay</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Only</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chinese (1)*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa/Jaba</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chinese (1)/Bhasa-Malay</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chinese (1)/Bhasa-Malay/Aceh</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazak/Russian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chinese (2)/Bhasa-Malay</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lugandan/Swahili</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chinese (3)/Bhasa-Malay</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chinese (4)/Bhasa-Malay</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhaelese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indo-Aceh</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil/Hindi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Indo/Chinese (1)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu/Farsi +2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kswahili/Gujurati</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu/Pashdo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Punjabi/Bhasa-Malay</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu/Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Singhaelese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek/Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Urdu/Arabic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnamese/Bhasa-Malay</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The number in parentheses indicates the number of Chinese languages/dialects the student spoke. (1) = 1 languages. Where one was spoken, it was most often Mandarin.

Since all the IBC programs in this study had English as the language of instruction, all the student-participants spoke English on a daily basis. However, the students in Dubai exhibited more skill conversing in English in the formal interview setting. In contrast, many of the students in Malaysia appeared to exert significant effort to communicate in English. All the students, with the exception of
two in Dubai had learned a language other than English at home or in their elementary and secondary schools. These languages often corresponded with their ethnic affiliations.

**Region**

At the end of their interview, students were asked about their regional affiliation and whether they felt any connection to a larger community than their national or ethnic affiliation. Table 15 indicates the regional friendship groupings that students described.

Table 15: Distribution of Participants by Regional Identification as Seen in Friendship Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UAE Region</th>
<th>Malaysia Region</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia (Russia/Uzbek/Kazak)</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Gulf</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>Muslim/Malay Peninsular</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>South East Asia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many students used regional terms to describe their friendship groups. This was also closely related to students’ language. They mentioned that they were friends with other students who spoke their main language. These groups are connected to geography, language and social status. In Dubai, the social status of Arab Gulf students often positioned them in different friendship groups from other Arabic-speaking students.

**Summary**

The above tables present just one picture of the students who attend IBCs in Dubai and Malaysia. The identities presented above are the identities with which the students aligned themselves at the
beginning of the interview when they were invited to write out their multiple identities. These tables help to further our understanding of how these students’ identities are constructed in the society around them, how they position themselves in relation to these external identities, and they lead us into the discussion of how students’ time at an IBC reshapes their connection to these identities.

Several relevant trends are illustrated in the tables above and three bear mentioning here. First, in both countries, 30% of the students were recently mobile, having only moved to their host country in order to participate in the IBC. In contrast, 55% of the students lived with their parents and a small remainder lived away from their parents but in the same country. For the students who lived with their parents, most had resided in the country for more than five years and were part of the wealthy ethnic minorities outlined in the previous chapter: Malaysian-Chinese in Malaysia and South Asians or Arabs in the UAE. Second, all of the students associated with a visible ethnic group (with the exception of one Malaysian-Chinese man) spoke one or more languages related to their ethnicity and may or may not have spoken Malay or Arabic, the language of the dominant ethnic groups. Third, for the 30% of students who were recently mobile, many were affiliated with the ethnic majority in their home country, though several held dual ethnicities, had lived in more than one country and came from countries where identity politics were explicit. For example, in Malaysia, one student-participant from Sri Lanka was part of the Singhalese majority, had lived in the Gulf where he was part of the wealthy South Asian minority and had done a few years of high school in Sri Lanka during times of civil unrest between the Singhalese and Tamil communities. These journeys ensured a multitude of different experiences and interpretations, but all of the student participants were very aware of how their lives were affected by socially constructed identity boundaries. Most were experimenting with ways to work within or around these through their participation in an IBC.

Section Two: Salient Identities Outside the IBC: Family, Ethnic Groups and Gender

In the second step of the interview students prioritized the identities they had written down and explained which ones were most important to them and most influential in their lives. This line of questioning addressed the first research sub-question: What identities do students value?

The main identities students chose were family and ethnicity. Family was the most valued by students and, combined with ethnic group, was the most influential. These identities influenced
students’ behaviour, outlook or interactions and determined their social community outside of university. Family, ethnicity and gender were very deeply intertwined in students’ stories and many of their experiences occurred at the intersections of these identities. Family and ethnicity often determined what primary or secondary school students had attended, how diverse their friends were and, for many women in Dubai, determined their future occupation. The following section explores the influence of family, ethnicity and gender on students’ lives outside of university.

**Family: The Most Valued Identity**

All the students of this study, in both locations, ranked family as their most valued identity. Although the concept of family can be understood in many ways, for the student-participants in this study it was discussed as the smallest collective unit to which they belonged; a collective that gave them support, purpose and a sense of their history. For all these reasons, family was the most important identity for students and had a strong influence on their lives.

Students were asked whether they saw family as their immediate siblings and parents or an extended unit of aunts and uncles. The answer differed by student, and as one student, Lana, wisely observed, the positioning of family identity depended on what other divisions existed nearby. She quoted an Arabic expression:

- عالجرب عمي وابن عمي وابن عمي وابن عمي

Translated, this means, “me and my brother against my cousin; me and my cousin against strangers.”

In both Malaysia and Dubai, students indicated that their family was the reason they were at university, providing them with the motivation to continue and achieve.

Gabriel noted (Malaysia): First of all, my family is most, the most important. When parents take care of you from child until now – I still owe something to parents. That is why – one thing my goals, I want to be – let my parents be happy about me.

Sharif (Dubai): My family they represent a big part of whom Sharif is, as being myself. I have an uncle that he works as a [public official]. And my aunt is a [public official]... I’m treated well. Because initially I come from a power family. They had a lot of powers. I don’t like to take it this way, but these steps have to be taken in Egypt in order to finish your own paperwork especially. If you have paperwork – you have to have a connection – okay my uncle works there and I’ll call him and he’ll get it done.
Arman, a young Kazak man who was studying in Dubai, expressed his love of his family and the work they had put into sending him to university.

Grace: So for you, which ones of these are most important to you?

Arman: Family... my mom has sacrificed a lot for me just to be here and to be the man I am today. And I’m really happy for that, I’m really thankful. I want to give back and stuff...

Basically whatever I do in my life I always have this thought of my family.

In Dubai, as well as being a valued identity for personal reasons, family relationships were important to the resident visa process. Students who had lived in Dubai before university were dependents on their parents’, often father’s, work visas.

**Ethnicity: The Most Influential Identity**

Students’ affiliation with an ethnic group was seen as the most influential identity in students’ lives in the context outside of the IBC. As Table 12 above indicates, students identified with a range of ethnic groups linked to either their nationality or minority linguistic group within a particular nation. Students also described many aspects of their ethnic identity that were closely linked to their family and gender identities. Several examples are below.

**Ethnicity and High School.** For most of the students, their ethnic group had determined the primary and secondary schools they attended. Since students’ lives up to the point of their interviews had been dominated by their participation in educational institutions, they made frequent comparisons between their IBC experiences and their past experiences in compulsory levels of education. Most of the students, particularly those from large minority groups, had attended a high school specifically for their ethnic group. These high schools offered a curriculum, different from the country’s federal system of education. For Indian students in Dubai, the common curriculum was the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Indian syllabus, though the instruction was in English. In Malaysia the Chinese Independent Schools (CIS) offered the CIS curriculum regulated by the UCSCAM and instruction was in Chinese (see Chapter Five). Several students who had grown up in other countries also talked about going to high schools just for their ethnic group.

One student in Malaysia, Nick, described how the Malaysia-Chinese high school he attended furthered his Chinese identity, one aspect of which was its critique of the Malay majority.
Nick: ...Because during my high school and secondary – that means when I am young. All the people around me is Chinese. So, everyone used to be racist. I mean as in, they really criticize how Malay or other ethnic things....when we are young we always think that Chinese is good one. Because – in Malaysia – because of culture and everything. So Malay used to easily get something from government compared to Chinese so we always used to think that Chinese is the best but then government don’t like Chinese. This is how we think when we are young. Especially when we come to almost the end of our high school the scholarship opportunity is so less compared to others. So that is the time when we keep on blame on others.

Lisa, a student who had traveled to Malaysia for university and was Indonesian-Chinese, spoke about how different the IBC was from her mono-ethnic college (high school).

Lisa: Ya – it is so different. Because last time when I was in college I was not learning a lot of stuff. Because it was just a small college. And it was all my friends from Hakka Chinese. So we learned the same thing.

In Dubai, Priti noted that the international high school she had attended offered two curriculum options for students: either British or Indian. The British one enrolled more Arabs while the Indians and Pakistani students enrolled in the Indian program.

Priti: ...We studied the British syllabus and there was an Indian syllabus as well. So we had this barrier between. Because they separated the school from the CBSE to the GCSE (UK-based General Certificate of Secondary Education). So if the parents wanted their children to learn the British syllabus they would be on our side but if they wanted their children to learn the Indian syllabus they would be on the other side.

For other students, their participation in mono-ethnic high schools had reinforced certain stereotypes about their cultures. The students who were educated with the CIS or CBSE curriculum spoke of the intense academic competition that made the institutional atmosphere challenging.

Bhima: I came from one of the most difficult high schools there is. CBSE – its’ like a lot more cramming or researching or applying anything. And my specialization was in science which included biology, chemistry, physics... There was a joke that science students could literally study 18 hours a day. Which was probably true.
Many of the Chinese-Malaysian students mentioned the pressure they faced from their family and ethnic group related to their achievement in school. The students were critical of the highly competitive and individualized approach they felt their parents, peers and high schools perpetuated.

Stephanie: And one of the other [Chinese values] is competitiveness. You know that “Kumon” students – they say in Malaysia. So parents would always talk with their friends and they compete with their sons and daughters. They are always comparing – ya comparing – their children.

*Ethnicity and Gender.* Gender and ethnic identities were strongly linked for women in the UAE. They noted that their family and ethnic group placed certain expectations on them to be married shortly after university.

Bhima: I’m Indian. Well that doesn’t have a major bearing on – well it does – because there are certain things related to our culture that many many people would not understand especially when it comes to girls... That’s kind of the tendency in Indian culture, which I have really really hated. Well it’s there and you can’t do anything about it. And it’s also because there are so many expectations placed on women. Okay, she has to get married by the time she’s 25 or 26, she has to have a kid by the time she’s 30 otherwise they would go on reading meaning into things which aren’t even there. So that’s kind of problematic but it’s kind of hard to walk the line. It’s going to get worse.

Natasha, a woman who had lived in Dubai for primary school, traveled to India for high school, spent one year at university in Canada and had returned to the UAE to complete her degree, was critical of what she saw as the conservative Indian values that restricted women. At the same time Natasha and several other women expressed their pride in their ethnic identity and considered it very important identity despite the associated gender roles.

Natasha: I come from the kind of family where it was always men who worked and my grandmother, she didn’t work. My aunts, my grandfather’s sisters, none of them ever worked. And it was actually considered huge like “oh my God” that my mom was working and my dad’s elder brother’s wife was working. And she’s doing really well.

Natasha (later on): I know a lot of people who have become really obsessed migrating to other countries. And they’re like – oh, I’m Australian now, I’m not Indian; Oh, I’m Canadian now, I’m
not Indian. And I’m just like – you grew up in India, you moved to Canada when you were 10. You can’t really say that you are not Indian any more. So I don’t really appreciate that sentiment. Yes, there are a lot of messed up things with India but that doesn’t mean you completely throw it away. It is a big part of who you are.

In a similar sentiment Lana critiqued the attitude of the Arab community toward women, but expressed her deep commitment to her home country of Egypt.

Lana: Especially the Arab guys. They try to be open minded about it but then when it comes to like an Arab woman, they can’t. Its like, “no you’re not supposed to do this”.
Lana: I’m kind of very patriotic <laughs>. I don’t like people insulting Egyptians or saying anything bad about Egypt. That’s my home and I will protect it <laughs>.

**Ethnicity and Overcoming Stereotypes**
The students who had not attended a high school exclusively for their ethnic group were still aware of the strong influence of ethnic identity in their surrounding society. For these students, ethnic identity was something they felt they had overcome or transcended. They spoke of a sense of pride in having graduated from high schools that did not match their citizenship or ethnicity. The students viewed this as a sort of social capital, an ability to exist within another culture, perhaps speak the language or look the part of some other group.

One student from Dubai indicated that his parents did not want him to attend a high school with a “local mindset,” but rather one that was international.

Tamier: My parents were very specific about it. They didn’t want me to be in an Indian or Pakistani school. There is really no point giving the kids international experience unless they are actually receiving it. Because Pakistani and Indian schools are very local mindset. And I don’t want to say anything bad about anyone in my class but a lot of them I can see that came from Indian or Pakistani schools – they are very different from me specifically. It is really difficult for me to relate... Specifically they are stuck in their beliefs a lot of time. They are not as open minded. I cannot have a full deep discussion with them because a lot the times they don’t want to explore certain avenues... and I don’t have an Indian-Pakistani rivalry or anything but a lot of the time when I’m discussing politics with them or the whole decades-long issue they will basically talk about what’s been fed to them. They won’t come
up with new ideas of their own. That is the main issue. They regurgitate information. Where I like to give my own ideas. And I have a lot of ideas to give because I have learned a lot from other places. A lot of time I don’t get that.

Lawrence was a Malaysian-Chinese student who had attended a public high school in Malaysia and spoke excellent English and Malay. His skin was darker than many of his Chinese peers and he was fluent in other languages. He described the shock of his peers when he revealed he also spoke Chinese. He expressed his pride in his ability to cross cultural divides, calling it his “hidden talent.”

Lawrence: ...Some of them look shocked when I speak Chinese because I am quite tanned – like wow, you speak Chinese. So it is like really surprised, really shocked. So that is like my hidden talent. Wow, you can speak Chinese. Because [they are] usually shocked – because here when you are tanned they think I am Malay or Indian. So you are Chinese, you speak Chinese? Wow.

While several Chinese students were critical of the exclusively Chinese high schools, Halida, a young woman whose parents had immigrated from Indonesia had chosen to go to an ICS school to further her skills in her father’s business.

Halida: It actually was influenced by my dad’s business. All the suppliers are all among the Chinese. So I was like - Can I go to a Chinese school? During my kindergarten I was in English school... I don’t know why – I really love learning languages and people.

Halida had realized at an early age the importance of crossing ethnic divides in Malaysia because of how influential the Chinese community was in the business sector. At the same time, she acknowledged the challenges she faced in attending a Chinese school and how she sought help from her neighbours.

Halida: I got a really hard time while learning Mandarin. Both of my parents...have a little education background because they are from Indonesia. And the way I learned Mandarin is by knocking on my neighbour’s door, “how can I do this homework?”

Later on in her interview, Halida proudly described her ability to make friends across cultures by talking to all her peers in their language of comfort.
Grace: ...Are the friends that you have made here – are they mostly Chinese? Or from everywhere?

Halida: I: From everywhere. I have Maltese, Chinese, Malay, Indian, Indonesian - Indonesian they are from many parts of Indonesian. So I get to, like when I see Indonesian people I speak in Indonesian language. And I meet with Chinese friends in Mandarin, Malay in Malay. And Mauritius friends, they do speak in Hindi. So when I was trying to make jokes – then I talk to them in Hindi.

Ethnicity and Choosing an IBC. The majority of students had attended a mono-ethnic high school and only became critical of that environment after attending university. However, a handful of students had intentionally chosen to attend an IBC in order to avoid the “local” or “ethnic” way of thinking.

Jun Li: Uh, I didn’t want to graduate from like a college that is known for Chinese only. I don’t want to be labelled as someone from Chinese educated. Cause I mean like that is like a very traditional thinking in Malaysia. Like if you come out from a Chinese school your attitude is going to be like this. But I always didn’t want to associate myself like this – not because of where I come out from – which school I come out from how you define me. Where as, that is why I decided to come here.

Stephanie: Ya, actually the Western culture part is actually a big factor for me. I wouldn’t like to go to like an old Chinese community college. Or you know – somewhere that is very ethnic. I would like something that is very international that would voice out. Where you can hang around and mix with different types of people. It is so interesting.

Alona from Kazakhstan said her aim in attending a IBC was to meet people from many other cultures.

Alona: When I first came to Dubai – I started to socialize with international students, not from my country. I was like hi, bye, how are you. I was trying to find more friends from another culture. That is maybe what made me to be more open minded and that is that helped me to improve my language as well.

Summary
For the student-participants in this study their families and ethnic affiliations were the most influential identities that shaped their lives before university and outside of university. For several of the women in Dubai, their family and ethnic identities were strongly linked to their identity as women, particularly the restrictions they felt because of that identity. For the majority of students, primary or secondary school had been formative to their identities. Those who attended mono-ethnic schools had friends mainly from within their ethnic community, while those who had not attended mono-ethnic schools were proud of their ability to transcend identity boundaries.

The IBC Supporting and Challenging Students’ Identities: Five Themes

The third part of the interview asked students how they felt their IBC experience supported or challenged their identities. After the transcripts were analysed using Grounded Theory’s three step coding method, five main themes were constructed from the data: IBCs as identity-free spaces, new identities, academic divisions, social divisions and invisible identities.

Figure 11: Interview Themes Comparing Students Perceptions and Experience
Theme 1: The IBC as Identity-Free

When students were asked how their identities were supported or challenged at the IBC, many were quick to say that identity divisions were not present at the IBC. Rather the IBC was perceived as an identity-free place that did not discriminate between students from different ethnic, religious or linguistic backgrounds. As one young woman said, “In university they don’t really differentiate. They just make sure that they don’t violate any of the regulations [of the] Muslim culture over here. But other than that they’re very open to what we’re saying,” (Nameet, Dubai).

Friends

Many students were excited that they had developed new friendships at the IBC with those from different backgrounds from their own. They often considered this to be evidence that identity divisions were not present at the IBC. Although, as the following themes outline, significant identity divisions did exist at the IBC, students’ initially described their friends as a diverse group that was not concerned with ethnic or national background.

In the UAE, many of the students spoke about the friendships they had made outside of their ethnic or national affiliations.

Priti: I think it really was after I came to uni I’ve met Nigerian people, African people. Because I only knew two Africans in high school. One from Kenya and one from Nigeria. But the best thing is, just because we’re from different countries it doesn’t mean we speak to other people in a different way or we treat someone else differently - we don’t.

Alexa: Because you can see people from different countries, from different cities, from different continents. And I really love it. That you can meet people and you can know them better and you can actually be friends.

Arman: One of my best friends right here right now. He is a great dude, he’s from Gambia, he’s African. Something I never thought I’d have, a best friend from Africa. This is so weird, I’m from a completely different country. But we’re like really cool.

Anila, a recently mobile student from Pakistan who was living in Malaysia, observed personal changes in her behaviour and thinking as she learned to be friends with diverse students around her. She perceived the branch-campus experience as something that set her apart from her high school friends.
Anila: I feel I have changed as a person... I have completely changed my thinking... I used to be like ‘Oh, I can’t talk to this person – oh, not cool enough’. And like, ‘What is wrong with you?’ You know that thing that comes in when you are still in high school. But in university... I am a very friendly person. I don’t care what you talk like or what you look like... It wouldn’t have happened if I’d stayed back home. I really believe. Because my friends are still standing there where I left them.

She also noted that she was now friends with many people from different countries, something she had never thought would happen:

Anila: ...Because first year you come in and it is the first experience you have of so many nationalities. And so many different kinds of people. ... When you come in your first year you just come and you’re like what is going on? But in your third year ya – now I am friends with like Sri Lankans, Sudanese, Egyptians, Kazaks. Like so many different kinds of people. Best friends with Bangladeshis – I never thought – we’re planning, making plans for your wedding – oh we’re going to come. That is a plan, we will, hopefully attend each others’ weddings and important events in our lives. Move across countries. And I never thought of going to Sri Lanka to visit a friend or going to Bangladesh but that has changed.

**Pluralism and Understanding**

Beyond making friends, the students described a new ability to live in a pluralistic context. Amina, a Muslim Malay student in Malaysia who had attended a mainly Malay high school, described her process of making friends across cultures and learning to understand and accommodate their religious or lifestyle differences.

Amina: Now I am friends with Chinese and Indonesians, even from Mauritius. So I do sometimes ask what their do’s and don’ts is so I can respect them. Like Buddhists they don’t eat meat. So after that if you go in I will say sorry if I want to eat meat.

Likewise, Natasha in Dubai, described her new ability to coexist with those with whom she disagreed.

Natasha: I have a group of friends – like we are Arabs, Pakistanis, Indians, Australians, Canadians everybody, you know. And like a whole group of people. For example, if someone is Muslim, they have a certain way of viewing certain things. I don’t necessarily
agree with them but I have no right to view my angst against that opinion. Because that’s who she is, there is nothing I can do about it. I have no right to say anything. Which is, I think, a very good habit to inculcate. Because I am usually very opinionated.

Open-mindedness
A central characteristic of the IBC, one that contributed to students’ perception that the institution was identity-free, was open-mindedness, which many students were encountering for the first time. Students spoke very positively about the open-mindedness of the new friends they had made. In Malaysia, Jun Li – a Malaysia-Chinese student who had attended government schools, noted that the IBC felt different from high school.

Jun Li: I mean it felt totally different. The people that I meet, they are more open. How do you say it - they don’t have the grouping and that sort of thing.

Lanh, a Vietnamese student who was studying in Malaysia, explained what it means to have an open mind:

Grace: So what do you mean when you say “open mind”? What does that mean when someone says an “open mind”?

Lanh: So you can look at different perspectives and somehow you can empathize other race and other opinions.

In Dubai, Bhima suggested that students at the IBC were more likely to be open-minded because they came from open-minded families:

Bhima (UAE): The fact that parents have sent their kids to university like that automatically means anyways that they have a much more openminded outlook. And so do their kids. So that open mindedness I have seen at this university would not be comparable to the mindset I would see at perhaps an Indian university or if I hadn’t come to university at all.

Curriculum
Students also applauded the curriculum at the IBC for being open-minded and providing space to discuss complex or controversial subjects that may not have been frequently discussed in the surrounding culture. One young woman in Dubai specifically referenced her Philosophy class as providing a space to discuss more open-minded concepts.
Priti: But if I went to like local university I don’t think they would have something like philosophy because it is more open-minded. And the country’s law is more strict.

Grace: So this university doesn’t necessarily reflect the culture around it?

Priti: Not really, no. Philosophy is really very open minded. All the theories about God and humans and language.

Likewise, Aya, another woman in Dubai spoke of her cross-cultural communication course as an important space in which she learned to work with others from different backgrounds.

Aya: But this course it really changed my mind. I have to give up some points and stick to some points. Listen to some people and give them a chance. It is not only me in this world. But if I’m working alone I can do whatever I want, but if you’re in a group you have to listen and understand, adapt, adjust. It is amazing, I love this course.

Grace: Which things do you feel you have to stick to and what things do you feel you had to give up?

Aya: I think my values, I have to stick to them, but sometimes you have to be 50/50. Pull and push from both sides. Okay we can understand your point but make it 50/50. Do this and do that. Not only your way. Yah.

It is important to note that many of the courses seen by the students as more open-minded were part of the mandatory foundation year students took before their business degree. As Chapter Seven suggests, this foundation year curriculum should be expanded to encourage students’ affective development in the latter years of their degree.

For several students their participation in extracurricular student clubs taught them to value ability over ethnicity, both in themselves and their peers. For Nick, whose descriptions of ethnic prejudice are described below, the move to university changed his perception dramatically as he began to look more at people’s capabilities than their ethnic background.

Nick: Then when I come to diploma and university – especially uni – because in [student club] you really get the chance to work with others, and you need to deal with – because when you go corporate you cannot choose whether it is a Chinese or what is that. So when I am dealing with the Malay and what, I can see the different side of them. So it is not
really as what we are told since we are young. So by the time my mind starts to change I
don’t mind who are they as long as – now maybe more I’m focused on their capabilities.
Come up with the work instead of what ethnic is their background. So the way of looking at
others also different.... Instead of ethnic and all those things. So at that time, “oh, okay.
Not really as what I thought since young.”

Summary
The quotes from students like Nick, Anila, and Aya describe a very distinct change that students undergo
as their ethnic prejudices diminish at the IBC. This change was experienced by several students who, at
the beginning of their interview, suggested the IBC was an identity-free space where all students were
able to develop friendships and interact without the ethnic-based restrictions of the surrounding
context. Some students had intentionally enrolled in an IBC in order to break free from the stereotypes
linked to their ethnic or national group. Others wanted to escape a mindset they considered definitive
and limiting. Most of the students were very enthusiastic about the diverse group of friends that they
had developed at the IBC.

As the interviews unfolded, students’ initial enthusiasm about the IBC as an identity-free space
became more nuanced. Students began to describe new identity divisions that were emerging at the
IBC because of the emphasis on English language and leadership skills. The next two themes explore
this development in students’ responses, describing the new identities that are prioritized through the
IBC curriculum and the ensuing academic divisions that these create.

Theme 2: New Identities: Group work Develops the Confident, English-speaking
Leader

Group work
The majority of students suggested the IBC pedagogy promoted a new set of identities related to their
abilities as confident, English-speaking leaders. The main driver of this change was the problem-based
group assignments that were designed to build leadership skills and English abilities. Students in both
the UAE and Malaysia were quick to highlight their participation in group assignments as a significant
factor promoting personal change during their university degree. At the four IBCs examined for this
research, group-based assignments were central to the business degree programs. In 2008, the
Australian Ministry of Education prioritized soft skills, problem solving and group leadership as learning
outcomes for undergraduate business students. Subsequently, Australian universities at home and overseas re-structured their curriculum to include cumulative group assignments in each year of study. Likewise, in the British business curriculum, group learning was a key aim of the program.

Students described their gradual, often reluctant, shift toward embracing group work. In their first year of study, they found the process of completing work as a group difficult and tedious. For example, Gloria, an Indonesian-Chinese woman who had moved to Malaysia for school, found herself learning new leadership skills as a result of group-based assignments.

Gloria: I never lead people before. When I put inside the group, then I start to — oh my god — five people that I have to know each of them: what they good at, what they best at? Then I have to divide the work. Then they don’t want to do the work. I was so, like oh my goodness. Then they were like, don’t want to accept your opinion. You are trying to say to them - you are good at this then you better try this one...Then I was experiencing one time – when tomorrow is the submission they don’t submit to me today. Then I have to do the whole stuff because they didn’t do anything. So from that time I learned that I should not do the work for them... I learned to manage people, manage my time.

Nameet also described learning how to lead others and ensure they complete their portion of the work.

Nameet: Here we have a lot of group work and you can’t always be with your friends. What if your friends are not there? You have to learn to handle these things. And you have to learn how to delegate the work and how to make them work for you. Some people just don’t contribute. You have to be patient with them and make them understand they need to get on board with this. Just being in a group seems more challenging than being the teams captain at school (high school). Back then when I had stuff to get done I just did it myself. Here I have to make sure they get it done.

Although students found many aspects of the group work difficult, most students could identify the new skills they developed as a result. Bhima, a Dubai student expressed how much more communicative she had become by leading a group.

Grace: And do you have a lot of group work in your program?
Bhima: I: Yes, a lot. Especially this year – a lot of it. And back in school it was intensely individual.

Grace: Interesting shift. What type of skills do you think the group work has taught you?

Bhima: Patience. <Grace laughs>. A lot of patience. And I’m always given the leadership position because I’m – I’m not sure why but I am. There’s a lot of that patience element. There’s a lot of communication. Because when I first came into university I was definitely not as communicative as I am now. Maybe that has slowly advanced because I have opened up. Because it has a lot to do with group work as well. Because you deal with people who come from completely different backgrounds, completely different work ethics, who have completely different timings of working. Like I’ve been working - I have a group work submission tomorrow and I’ve been working with three people who all believe in coming to life after midnight.

In Malaysia, Teeni, a recently mobile student from Kenya, described how working in groups had helped her to overcome some of the identity stereotypes related to ethnicity. Group work had taught her to collaborate with other students, no matter what their ethnic background, and helped her produce better work.

Teeni: Well, I have always been open but I think it really had made a difference. Because after coming here is when you realize that professional-wise it is not only about a certain race or a certain group – you need everyone to do a good, to progress.

Grace: Can you give me an example of when that became clear to you?

Teeni: When we have group work to do and all. That does make a big impact. Because there are some people that don’t work at all and there are some people that do – I mean it is there in all the groups. Ya – it just makes you realize – like everyone is different - but when you work together you can manage.

Grace: Has [group work] developed any other skills?

Teeni: Ya, there’s like loads of time management that has come. A lot of that. Improving the writing skills. It has made a really big difference.

Grace: Group work has? How is that?
Teeni: Because when I do something – when I show it to my group - if it is wrong or right – people will consult each other.

Grace: Correcting process. And have you enjoyed the group work?

Teeni: Yes – well, some no. <laughs> Because there are some people who don’t work which is really frustrating.

*Communication and Confidence*

Students developed new skills and improved in their confidence as leaders and English speakers through working in groups. This thesis argues that these areas of development construct new identities for students as they come to define themselves as English-speaking professionals who are able to lead their peers. Several students described in detail their change from being quiet in high schools to developing confidence as their English communication and leadership skills improved in university.

Amina (Malaysia): Because I used to be very quiet person when I was in my secondary school. So when I start to join in [university] I don’t have a lot of – because when I was in secondary schools I was – a lot of my friends were Malay friends and I rarely speak English.

For Joseph, a Malaysian –Chinese student, he also noted an increase in confidence at university.

Joseph (Malaysia): And one of the most important thing is that in uni they give you confidence. Because when we come out from high school they don’t give us as much confidence as uni. It is like – how you say – I don’t know how to explain it but when i compare to these two periods. When I approach strangers or professionals, totally different. Because last time, I don’t like to approach – I am not talkative type. I’m quite quiet during high school. But in uni – maybe because of the clubs, maybe because of the presentations we are required to do – and the interviews we are required to deal with strangers and professionals outside. So that is how it gives me – it feels like that. And once we do it a few more time we are – we get that confidence and talk like normal.

Likewise, Jeelyn described the confidence she had gained through university.

Jeelyn (Malaysia): I think that I am more confident. Because I used to – in school, during my high school – I am very shy and never used to talk much. After I joined university then I am more confident. Because I had to do a lot of presentations and things like that. So I am
more open, more confident. And skills... Critical thinking skills. Because the Malaysian schools they hardly have this critical thinking. Ya – they just give textbook page and things.

Grace: So tell me what you consider to be critical thinking.

Jeelyn: Because normally lecturers give one topic and you have to think of what are the causes of it. And you have to think more in detail.

Alona, a recently mobile student from Kazakhstan who studied in Dubai described the shock of her high school friends when she returned to Kazakhstan for holidays.

Alona (Dubai): And then we were talking and we were talking – the three of us and he was pretty shocked because he saw the difference how I had change. Because I told you in school I had this lack of like attention...And he saw this change and he was pretty shocked because I was talking a lot about what I am doing here in Dubai and what I’ve been through – the events, everything. And was like, [Alona] is it you? I can tell that it is really hard to stop you talking. But that time when I saw you in school you were pretty quiet, pretty unconfident.

Leadership
The majority of students who participated in this study had taken on a leadership role in their group work contexts. Many expressed that this was an entirely new experience for them. In Malaysia, Claire noted that being a leader was a completely new identity she had never encountered before.

Claire: I was never the leader until now.

Grace: <both laugh> Now here at university you are?

Claire: Ya.

Grace: And do you like it?

Claire: Ya.

Grace: So what skills has that taught you – being a leader?

Claire: Well it is definitely not easy being a leader at all. Especially at this point in time. Because I’m taking [this course] in my second year – ya – it is not really an easy task at all.
You have to actually follow up with people’s work, follow up with your team’s work and guide them through, you know. I mean there is some tension anyway – because when they delay their work you have to catch up on them – you have to push them and then it is not really as well.

For some students, their new role as a leader challenged their friendships as they learned to manage people regardless of their relationship with them.

Lisa (Malaysia): Otherwise I will assign another work for them.... like fine them. Like one of my best friends here – he put in one group with me. But he not good – he is not doing the work very well. So I have to punish him. Otherwise I look like I am not fair to other members. And I have to fine, reduce his mark, that kind of stuff.... It is also quite tough for me the first time I was leader.

For Lisa, her leadership identity took precedent over her friendships and altered how she interacted with her friends.

Summary
Students developed new identities at the IBC related to their improving skills as English speakers and leaders. These skills were explicit aims of their programs and were being honed through the group work assignments. Most students said their leadership identity was an entirely new experience for them. They were learning to manage their peers and share their ideas with confidence.

Although students’ perceived the IBC to be identity-free, there was a clear expectation in the curriculum of who students should become. Many of the politicized identities in the surrounding context, such as ethnicity or language, were diminished at the IBC, but these were being replaced by a new set of essential skills that students must achieve. As the following theme illuminates, identity divisions based on region and language were quick to re-enter the IBC as students from diverse communities struggle to work together in groups.

Theme 3: Identity and Academic Divisions: Language, Ethnicity, Work Habits and Gender
Identity Divisions in Group work
Group work had the dual effect of improving students’ confidence in their leadership skills and reinforcing identity divisions between ethnic and linguistic groups. As students participated in groups they became increasingly aware of the differences in their peers’ English language skills and work habits, often associating these with specific ethnic or linguistic groups. Several students indicated that when forming groups for class assignments, students would sort themselves by region or language.

Jay (Dubai): There is this kind of like segregation where the blacks will be with the blacks, the whites will be with the whites. Same with the Indians [and] the Russian slash Asian part of that group. And it actually shows when we form groups as well. Because — okay, last semester I took four subjects and the three subjects you needed to have groups and most of them were like: Russian-speaking — go that way and you see the Indians — go that way.

Jay was studying in Dubai, held Nigerian citizenship and had grown up in the UK. The categories that Jay describes in his quote above are not cleanly delineated along language or nationality lines. Rather, he uses terms related to race, region, citizenship and language to describe the ways in which students would choose groups. His description suggests that all of these factors are interrelated and influential in sorting students into work groups.

Language. In each country, students talked about how the groups often formed around members who spoke the same language. This was more noticeable in Malaysia where students’ abilities to speak English varied greatly. Jun Li, whose critique of mono-ethnic universities is noted above, described the challenge of being in a group in which all the other members spoke a different language. Again, language identities intersect in his experience with gender identities and all combine to cause complex divisions between Jun Li and his peers.

Jun Li: My groupmates are all Indonesians and I am the only Malaysian. So first of all language is going to be a problem. So language, plus they are three females, with due respect. So I cannot talk to them the way I talk to guys. ... When delegating tasks, I have to tell them in a way that makes sure I am not trying to push or [offend] them but we have to do it to get the work done.

G: Are you the leader?

I: Mostly the leadership.

G: Do you all just speak English?
I: We all speak English, but the thing is when they have their discussion and they talk about [or are] discussing about something, they speak in Indonesian. And that is mostly in the group discussion. Like when I come out – like for example giving my students this – this is our task for this week. Then they discuss with the friends, they discuss in Indonesian... Then after that they come back and are like, “Okay, we know what to do,” and all that. But whenever they do it [I am like]: “No, this is not what it is supposed to be”.

Another Malaysian-Chinese student, Jim provided the opposite outlook, indicating that he would not participate in the group if the discussion was in English rather than Chinese.

Grace: In class when you are doing group workshops or discussions – do you find yourself the quiet person or the leader?
Jim: The quiet person.
Grace: The quiet person. Okay. And has that – were you like that in high school? Or did that change in university?
Jim: I think there is a difference between whether the discussion is in Chinese language but if English I am totally silent. Totally.

Jim exemplifies the contradiction between students’ perception that the IBC is identity-free and their experience of divisions based on identity. Following the above conversation Jim was asked:

Grace: Is being Malay-Chinese – is that something you think about more in university?
Jim: I don’t think that makes any difference.
Grace: So it makes no difference in university?
Jim: We are just Malaysian and everyone is Malaysian around me.

The belief that the branch-campus was identity-free in relation to ethnic identities, still remained strong for students, even for Jim who found himself unable to adapt to English as the language of instruction and unable to take an important leadership role in a group work setting.

Work Habits. Students spoke very positively about the communication and management skills they developed as a result of working in groups, but they did not necessarily speak positively about their groupmates or learn to tolerate those of different ability and work habits. Instead, working together in groups had the potential to highlight the differences between students. Stereotypes began to emerge
as students observed that their classmates from certain ethnic groups worked with different levels of promptness and completion. In particular, the high-achieving, academically-oriented students - Indian students in Dubai, Malaysia-Chinese students in Malaysia - expressed frustration with their Arab (in Dubai) or Indian and Malay peers (in Malaysia), who they perceived as having different work habits.

In Malaysia, Ryan described how he perceived the working habits of each ethnic group.

Grace: You said that in class and in group work you notice that you are the Malaysian-Chinese. What makes that more noticeable? Give me an example.

Ryan: One thing definitely, in a sense of language, the accent we have. And also another part would be the – how should I say – the values that we bring in when we come to work. So different kind of work ethics when it comes to work. So that also is another difference that is highlighted in terms of nationality and culture background... I would say that Chinese in general but more in the Malaysian-Chinese context, would be pretty much competitive, so we are kind of like never relaxed and constantly comparing with our peers, our performances. So when compared to other people I guess that is something that is pretty much distinctive of us. People from certain backgrounds are different as well. At the same time I do think that like Vietnamese would be pretty competitive as well. Then we have also our peers in university, people who are from South Asia. So they would take pretty much a more relaxed kind of way dealing with things. But when it comes to presentation they really have an edge. Ya, so they are really, really good presenters. They know what they are talking about. So that would be their edge.

Likewise, Lanh, a student from Vietnam who had moved to Malaysia for school described his new awareness of how diverse groups should be managed. He indicated this topic was explicitly taught by lecturers.

Lanh: But I understand more about managing in Asia. Like Vietnamese they have different style of managing. And Malaysian-Chinese they also have different style of management – and Indian-Malaysian and Malay-Malay – they also have different style of management.

G: And do you think that you learned that in class or in [extra-curricular club]? Where did you learn it?
Lanh: From both – from the lecturers also. For example, because in [university] we have like – the lecturer they come from many backgrounds – diverse lecturers. Somehow they have different examples about their own background....

Grace: Can you think of a specific example?

Lanh: Let’s say for example, like Malaysian-Chinese – they prefer flexible working hours so that they can spend time for themselves for regularly. But for Malaysian-Indian they are a bit more like Vietnamese in which they also care about their family life. Like what is that term? The technical word for that? They prefer “self-secure”, is that it? Job-security.

Anila, a recently mobile student from Pakistan who was studying in Malaysia, described how she noticed that her own work habits were similar to others from South Asian backgrounds. Her observations were similar Ryan’s although she came from a different ethnic group. She compared her work habits with her Chinese peers, expressing her desire to change.

Anila: And Chinese people are also very efficient I would say. But us, my group of friends – Pakistanis, Indians, Sri Lankans, Bangladeshis – very last minute. They finish everything up, last two three days and submit it. And that is how I work over here but as my third year I am trying to not work like that. I’m trying to like calm down.

Jeelyn, a Malaysian-Indian students described her similar experience in a group:

Jeelyn: Actually right now I’m having a group in PD3 and there is 5 of us. Three guys and me and a girl. And ya, I definitely agree that the culture that makes – cause these guys, I feel that Malays, they are more – I’m not being racist or whatever, but Malays are very relaxed people I think. I guess like – I’m not saying I’m very good or what – they are too relaxed.

**Gender.** While many of the students mentioned how their group work activities highlighted the differences between ethnic groups, the gender divisions noted by Jun Li were also observed by several women in both countries. The women suggested that they were treated differently in their groups because they were women.

Jeelyn (Malaysia): If I am doing group work, people tend to think that just because I am a girl they think that I am very hardworking. But actually, I am not that hardworking. But I get my things done on time but I am not a very hardworking kind of person”.

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Shamira (Dubai): I used to work with five guys. I was the only girl in the group. I was fine with it because they are all my friends, I know them for a year now. So we were working on the same project but they actually got me for granted by telling me we’ll just cancel this meeting. And I had all the work on my back since I was the only girl. And I was the group leader – sadly. And they saw me that I’m on time, I used to give the outline to the teacher, everything. So it’s just like they put everything on my back. So that is the biggest mistake for showing people how nice you are to them.

Summary

Although students were very positive about the skills they had developed working in groups, it was clear that the process of working together had the potential to emphasize students’ diverse identities. Language ability was a key factor that determined students’ participation in or withdrawal from the group, and especially their likelihood of assuming a leadership role. Group work also highlighted the working habits of different ethnic groups, perpetuating stereotypes and leading to frustration for some students.

Theme 4: Social Divisions: Language and Regions

Students’ academic experiences and the subsequent identity divisions these experiences highlighted were related to the specific policies and learning approaches of the Western branch-campus such as the exclusive use of English and group-based pedagogy. In contrast, students’ encounters in the non-academic, social space of their university were not linked to policy but the informal friendships they were making inside and outside of class.

Friendships

A frequent contradiction in students’ interview responses was their simultaneous claim that a) their friends were from a diverse range of backgrounds, and b) their friends were mainly from their region, language or ethnic group. After more in-depth interview questions about the boundaries of their friendship groups, it became clear that students really did believe that they were making friends from a diverse range of backgrounds. Since many of the students had attended high schools exclusively for their own ethnic group, the mix of friends they had developed at the IBC appeared, in contrast, very diverse.
Several hours of observations of students’ informal interactions outside the classroom, combined with further interviews, helped establish the nature of students’ new friendships. In Dubai, where a large variety of smaller ethnic communities existed, students found themselves making friends along broader lines such as region or language. Several students were very aware of these divisions and expressed frustration at the groupism on campus.

Jay (Dubai): Soon as I get to Dubai, to [this university] actually – there is this kind of like segregation where the blacks will be with the blacks, the whites will be with the whites. Same with the Indians.

Aamod (Dubai): Most of [my friends] are from Asia – India, Pakistan, Afghanistan. One person from Russia... I don’t know whether it is coincidence. All of my friends are in the same group – except for maybe two or three that are a bit different.

Shamira (Dubai): Since the majority of the people in this uni is Indians so they give them the importance more than Arab students or other students. So they make – how could you say it – some racism? Ah, you’re Arab, they’re Indian. You see this is the way they call them. They don’t call them – this is the way we’re students. We’re all one together. No – this is the way it is and this is how everyone knows it – you’re Arab, you’re Indian.

Lana (Dubai): I came and I have friends from like everywhere. But Egyptians, and I think with other nationalities, we kind of attract each other. I know most, I am close friends with them. It just happened, it wasn’t intentional.

**Language**

Likewise in Malaysia, when discussing the divisions in their friendship groups, students highlighted the importance of geographic region. However, in Malaysia students were more likely to suggest language as the factor that determined with whom they were friends. Gloria summarized the importance of language and learning new languages or communication styles:

Gloria: How much I have changed? *<thinking noise ummm>* Learning like language is very important thing, yes? And I think language should be a continuous learning process. Because language is the – for example you are meeting a new friends and it is from the language and the gestures from this somebody that you actually know the personality, the
first impression. So to me language is a very important thing and I have learned the importance of it.

Several students also indicated that students’ friendship groups were often comprised of those who spoke the same language, often related to their region.

Anila (Malaysia): ...Everyone is in their own certain like umbrella of countries here. Like if I’m a Pakistani then I am more comfortable with people who speak my language. So I would be with Bangladeshis, and Indians and you know, Sri Lankans to a certain extent. But like if you’re Egyptian, then like Egyptian, Sudanese, [Jordanian] – they all speak Arabic and they have a certain, you know umbrella over them... So they come together because they all speak the same language. And it is a fact – we are all sitting together and back home I would talk with my friends in English mostly because we are all from English speaking schools. But when someone from another country is sitting there you just automatically speak in your own language. It is a thing – it just comes out. You just start talking in your own language and that person feels left out. On the other hand – before that person came in you were talking in English. But suddenly that person comes in and you just start in on your own language. It is not something that you do it on purpose, it just happens. So ya – you do become the best of friends with people who speak your own language and the comfort level is much higher.

Gloria (Malaysia): They are Chinese. Because I am more comfortable in speaking Mandarin when it comes to solving a very serious problem I am more comfortable speaking Mandarin. But I don’t mind speaking English.

Likewise, Lisa, an Indonesian-Chinese student, indicated that she felt apart from the rest of the Indonesian-Chinese because she did not speak Hokkien:

Lisa: So they speak Hokkien. And I can’t understand at all. Because I speak with all my friend in Indonesian language –we speak in English. But most of them speak Hokkien so it is very hard for me to understand. So they make gang and when I am inside the gang I feel so small. They will talking all that stuff and they are laughing and I don’t just understand at all.

Summary
The identity divisions that influenced students’ social interactions and friendships were often related to their geographic region and the common language they spoke. Although the presence of these identity divisions contradicted students’ suggestion that IBCs were an identity-free space, students’ friendship groups were indeed broader and more inclusive than the ethnic categories of their primary or secondary school. As Anila’s example indicates, she was connected to the broader South Asian community encompassing those from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This was a contrast to her previous experience in Pakistan. Likewise, Russian-speaking students in the UAE often formed social groups connecting those in both Russia and Central Asia, a broader division than ethnicity or citizenship. Within these broader, regional divisions, language again played a major part in determining students’ friendship groups. All students were able to communicate in English, but several said they preferred to operate in the language linked to their region.

Theme 5: Invisible Identities: Family and Gender

As section two indicated, family was the most valued and influential identity selected by all students in both countries. Furthermore, in Dubai, gender was a very important identity for many of the women students. Yet, family and gender identities were not addressed at the identity-free IBC because of the overarching value that all students should be treated equally. Several students spoke of conflict at home because of their enrollment at a Western university, yet the Western university did not seem to acknowledge the importance of these identities or provide space for mediation.

Family

Although students’ family identities were largely unacknowledged inside the university, students described several ways in which this identity had been challenged or supported during university. Some students, often those who had left home to study at the IBC, described a new appreciation for their parents that had developed throughout university. They valued their parents’ hard work that enabled them to attend an IBC by providing them with financial support.

Teeeni (Malaysia): Actually when I first came here it was a really big change anyways so first I was still getting used to it. And then slowly you realize that you are far away from your family. You realize what they have done for you. So around maybe, late first year is when I thought that ya – it is not just only for me, but it is also for them.
Halida lived with her parents and in the interview when she described how much her parents had done to support her and her siblings she started crying.

Halida (Malaysia): And my parents – looking at how my parents work for us – for me and my siblings. They just want the best for us. My dad doesn’t really – he doesn’t have – he only studied until Standard Three and he told us about all his life experience. It is like our bedtimes stories – we love to hear it.... So I think – doing my [degree] is something for [my dad] to see. So dad, this is something I can prove to you – I hope to make you proud. I feel so - <tears up>.

For other students, their connection to their family was challenged at university as they began to make decisions about future work and living location. As mentioned above, 50% of the students lived with their parents and all but two were financially supported by them. Anila described the difficult choice she would face when she graduated and had to choose between working in a new country and being close to her family.

Anila (Malaysia): Do you want to stay here or do you want to go home, work in some other country? ... So that is the thing. If I start working here or somewhere else I won’t get enough time to be back home and spend with my parents. So that is the decision you have to make.

For other students, attending university signalled a shift away from family as their main identity. University was a time during which they learned to make decisions by themselves.

Bhima (Dubai): The way that I tend to take my decisions now and the way I tend to take them before have become completely different and there has been this kind of disinvolvment [from my family]. And there are things that I can’t really explain to them because they wouldn’t really do. Or maybe that’s the way I see it, that they wouldn’t understand. And then there are things in their viewpoint that their experience, that they are still trying to teach me but really isn’t applicable to the world as I see it today.

Still other students were challenged by the pressure their parents placed on them to succeed academically.

Priti (Dubai): But then I still have friends for example who have been forced to study medicine or accounting. Even when they’re really smart at something else... and I’m really
lucky because my parents are the type of parents who allow you to do whatever you want. Especially because until I was 13 I really wanted to become a doctor and now I’m studying finance.

The many years of parental influence continued to be a strong force in the lives of these IBC students but no students indicated that there was any programming on campus to help them better understand and mediate any conflicts this strong connection might cause.

**Gender**

Gender was another identity that was very important to women in the UAE but invisible at the IBC. The IBCs did not discriminate between students based on their gender. There was no programming that trained women for gender-specific professions and many of the women in this study took an active leadership role while at university. However, the IBC neutrality toward genders differed significantly from the situation many Arab and South Asian women faced at home. As the following quotes suggest, university was a time when gender identities, particularly the limitations of being female, became very apparent for student participants.

Below are the field notes and interview responses from Chira – a woman who lived in the UAE with her parents but held Pakistani citizenship.

*Chira is a commanding young woman. Very elegant and stately in her hijab and long black abaya. But she seemed so angry and resistant in this interview. Her posture was detached and defensive. She sat way back in her chair with her arms crossed, her brow lifted and her mouth tightly closed in a frown. She had me locked in her gaze and seemed to be searching me for something. Her answers were short and closed, so I thought the interview would end from lack of dialogue. She came voluntarily today – it was her choice - and she was one of the first students to sign up and schedule a time, so I am not sure what was going on. But my last question unleashed a torrent of thoughts that were perhaps just under the surface the whole time.*

Grace: Do you have any last thoughts? Any other ways that you think you have changed in university?

Chira: <pauses briefly, narrows her eyes and stares thoughtfully at me> I’ve become a feminist. I was never that before.
Grace: Tell me why?

Chira: Because I never actually thought of it as a big thing. I don’t know — I never gave it much thought. I never felt held back before just because of being a girl. And now I can actually feel it. Maybe it’s because I’m more exposed to it I guess because I’m coming of age. I’m more exposed to the fact that I’m a girl holding me back. So it has actually made me stand up for myself as well.

*Career-oriented*. Several women in Dubai described the process of a strengthening gender identity as they progressed through their university degree. A frequent story told by these young women was the process of becoming “career-oriented” in university and being less inclined to follow their parents’ plans for them to marry after graduation. The women described how they were not concerned about this in their first years of study, but as they found themselves succeeding at university, they began to question the decisions of their parents and found resistance to their new plans for a career. At the point of the interview, graduation was only a few months away and the conflict had become very acute. Lana, an Egyptian woman who lived in Dubai, described this process:

Lana: The woman thing kind of becomes an issue sometimes. It is about the culture mostly. Like families and society. The society makes a plan for me. It decides I am going to get educated, then I am going to move on and get married and have kids and that is how my life is going to go. I am more focused on — I want a career, I want to build a life for myself. And that becomes a problem sometimes because people they don’t take you seriously or if they do take you seriously they make you feel that is not how you should be. That is not how it is supposed to go. So that has become stronger. The gender thing is becoming stronger for me because I have to fight for my place... It is not just about legally. In people’s minds sometimes they don’t see women as equal.

Grace: So when did you get passionate about this?

Lana: Well actually when I came to university. Before that whenever I would say that I wanted a career or something I was still at that stage where I was looking at where I would go [to university]. Looking at where I would apply, what I would study. There is no definite plan. But now I’m at that stage where people would look at me and I’m becoming mature. So when I say this it’s not just a random thought that popped into my head. It’s an actual —
this is what I want to do with my life. So now that I’m set and taking it seriously people are starting to seriously react to it.

For Lana, family and gender are very interlinked. She was the eldest of five girls and said that family was her most important identity. She was the first in her family to enroll at a Western IBC and the process was difficult for her and her parents. Her parents supported her to attend university but felt the pressure from their surrounding community to ensure she was married afterward.

Likewise, Bhima described the negative response career-oriented women received from her Indian community:

Bhima: Well like I’ve said there have been spats, but the limits have been pushed a little, have been pushed back a little bit. It actually makes it a bit more challenging, because the moment you make yourself appear to be a career-oriented woman or someone who is ambitious, unfortunately the thinking in our culture is that she’ll literally do anything for career. And it is very hard to draw the line – walk the line between being career oriented and, you know, the self-respect thing…. it’s also because there are so many expectations placed on women. Okay, she has to get married by the time she’s 25 or 26, she has to have a kid by the time she’s 30 otherwise they would go on reading meaning into things which aren’t even there.

Bhima also perceived that her new career-oriented identity set her apart from other women students.

Bhima: Actually since I’ve come to university I’ve actually had more guy-friends than girls. Because I find that a bit disturbing – the fact that [girl] aren’t really looking to do anything with their degree. Because the guys tend to be more career-oriented, I’m tending to gravitate toward them.

These women suggested their new career-oriented identity was competing with their traditional gender identity. None of the women found space to discuss this issue in university. One of the women from a particularly restricted home life, who did not give permission for her interview to be recorded, indicated that her reason for participating in this interview was to find support from a Western woman and talk about her desire for a career. Although opportunities may have existed to help these students understand their role as women in Western systems of education and career-paths, none indicated that they had accessed these resources or found spaces to discuss this identity conflict in the IBC.
Summary

According to the students, the Western IBC operates on the principle that all students are equal rather than making distinctions based on identity. However, for many of the students, their position at an IBC created conflict within their family or previous gender identities yet the IBC did not acknowledge these conflicts or provide space to mediate these challenges. While identity divisions related to academic and social life were felt within the university, conflicts related to family and gender existed outside the university. These conflicts were very important to students who felt their interviews provided a space where they could talk about these identities which were not discussed frequently at university. As the women described this tension at the IBC, they indicated two new identities which had developed at the IBC: feminist and career-oriented.

Conclusion

This study found that university students enrolled in IBCs in the UAE and Malaysia experience the IBC as an identity-free space that diminishes the ethnic divisions of the surrounding context. At the same time, the IBC prioritizes a new set of identities related to students’ skill as English-speakers, career-oriented professionals and leaders. While students work toward these new identities through the group work curriculum, new divisions manifest related to their language and work habits. The initial divisions that students perceive decrease at the IBC are replaced by broader categories related to supra-national, geographic regions. Finally, students’ family and gender identities, so influential in the surrounding context, are largely unacknowledged at the IBC. Students suggest that these identities conflict with the IBC context and they are looking for ways in which to reconcile these with their IBC journey.

Comparing the UAE and Malaysia

Students enrolled at IBCs in the UAE and Malaysia described many similar identity-related experiences. In both countries, students valued the same core identity, family, and were also strongly influenced by their ethnic identities in the surrounding context. Students in both countries were also very enthusiastic about the diverse group of friends they were making at the IBC, though this group was still often limited to their region of origin. At the same time, group work with its emphasis on leadership and English skills was very influential in both countries.

There were two main differences between the research findings in the UAE and Malaysia. First, language played a much more divisive role in Malaysia than in Dubai. Although, on average, the
students in Malaysia spoke more languages than those in Dubai, there was greater disparity in their overall English language ability. Students in Malaysia were more likely to work in groups with those who spoke the same language and English language ability was a very significant factor in determining students’ academic success.

The second difference was the influence of gender in Dubai. Several of the woman participants indicated their enrolment in the IBC had led to conflict with their parents or broader ethnic community because the career-orientation of the IBC conflicted with their expected role as women. In Malaysia, none of the women who were interviewed selected gender as an important identity and none engaged in a discussion about gender when asked directly in follow-up questions.

This chapter has told the story of the diverse students who attend IBCs in the UAE and Malaysia. From the findings five themes were developed relating to how students’ identities were altered, or re-categorized, during university. In the following chapter, the Comparative Identity Index (CII) is used to illustrate how students’ identities change between contexts, being supported or challenged during their enrolment at the IBC. Also, consideration will be given to what these findings mean for students, institutions and the diverse nations that host them.
So when I am dealing with the Malay... I can see the different side of them. So it is not really as what we are told since we are young. So by the time my mind starts to change I don’t mind who are they as long as – now maybe more I’m focused on their capabilities. (Nick, Malaysia).

Identities are about negotiating new subject positions at the crossroads of past, present, and future. Individuals are shaped by their sociohistories but they also shape their sociohistories as life goes on, (Block, 2007b, p. 27).

This thesis has explored how students, attending Western branch-campuses in non-Western nations, perceive the university as supporting or challenging their identities. The findings suggest IBCs in the UAE and Malaysia institutionalize a new set of identities related to students’ ability as English speakers, leaders and career-oriented professionals. Several student-participants in this study applauded the IBC for existing outside the ethnic divisions of the surrounding society. Others, however, describes how linguistic and ethnic divisions were exacerbated by the group work pedagogy, categorizing students according to the language they speak and their work habits. Meanwhile, in their home lives, students found that their new, professional identities conflicted with their family and gender identities, identities that have a very real impact on students’ lives.

Chapter Overview
The purpose of this chapter is to consider what these research findings mean for higher education in the 21st Century, its supporting institutions and attending students. The first section uses the Comparative Identity Inventory (CII) to chart how IBCs prioritize particular identities and how these priorities contrast with the surrounding context of the host country. The second section revisits the five themes presented in Chapter Six and considers what these new identity priorities mean for students. This section provides a typology of four ways students respond to the academic and social structures of the IBC and reflects on the changing nature of identities from inherent to acquired. Sections three and four consider what these findings mean for IBCs and their host nations.
Section 1: New Priorities and Branch-campus Identities

Three Identity Categories within the Comparative Identity Inventory

Chapter Three suggested that multiple identities should be studied simultaneously while an understanding of the types or categories of identities is retained for purposes of analysis. Three categories of identity frequently examined in the literature are: a) formal identities that are institutionalized through particular policies or structures; b) informal identities that emerge out of the social interactions of diverse groups and c) informal identities that relate to personal attributes or features that distinguish individuals from the group at large.

Figure 12: Three analytical categories useful in understanding identity types

In order to understand how identities are constructed and prioritized in two contexts, figure 12 is expanded into the Comparative Identity Inventory (CII) chart below (Figure 13). Using the CII, one can illustrate for example how a particular identity category may be formalized by institutional policy in one context but minimized as a personal attribute in another. In this thesis, the CII provides a way to compare the nature of certain identities outside the IBC with how they are prioritized inside the IBC. The following sections use the CII, first to compare the identity priorities at IBCs in the UAE with those in Malaysia, and then to analyse each context individually, examining the nature of certain identities outside the IBC with those that are prioritized inside the IBC.
The main purpose of this thesis is to understand how students’ identities are supported or challenged during students’ enrolment at an IBC. In both the UAE and Malaysia it was evident that these processes occurred through the IBC experience repositioning certain identities, at least temporarily, making them a greater or lesser priority within the institution. The power of the IBC to reposition identities came through very clearly in interviewing students. The CII is used below to compare the identities that were most influential on students’ lives in the broader UAE context with those prioritized by the IBC. Figure 14 highlights several important identity shifts between the broader UAE context and the IBC. The significance of Citizenship, Ethnicity, Family and Gender are discussed below.

Figure 13: The Comparative Identity Inventory

*Identity Priorities in the UAE: Host Context vs. IBC*

The main purpose of this thesis is to understand how students’ identities are supported or challenged during students’ enrolment at an IBC. In both the UAE and Malaysia it was evident that these processes occurred through the IBC experience repositioning certain identities, at least temporarily, making them a greater or lesser priority within the institution. The power of the IBC to reposition identities came through very clearly in interviewing students. The CII is used below to compare the identities that were most influential on students’ lives in the broader UAE context with those prioritized by the IBC. Figure 14 highlights several important identity shifts between the broader UAE context and the IBC. The significance of Citizenship, Ethnicity, Family and Gender are discussed below.
Figure 14: Comparison of identity priorities in the broader UAE context and within the IBC

Citizenship and ethnicity. As the centre column indicates, citizenship and ethnicity were very influential in students’ lives before enrolling in the IBC. Many students suggested these identities decreased in importance at the IBC. Even the 28% of the student participants who had moved to the UAE solely for education had experienced the importance of these identities in UAE social life, whether through their part-time job or their interaction with friends. Thus, the absence of citizenship and ethnic identities in the far right column is significant. Citizenship determined students’ employment and political opportunities in the UAE, but was not influential at the IBC. All students paid the same fees, had access to the same campus employment and were treated equally within the administration of the institution regardless of their citizenship. Likewise, students’ ethnicity, which had often determined their primary or secondary school as well as their social community, was less divisive at the IBC. Instead, as the far right column indicates, students formed friendship groups according to their geographic region (South Asian, African) or its related language (Russian-speakers, Arabic-speakers).

Family. Another important shift in identity priorities between the surrounding UAE context and the IBC was the repositioning of family from an institutional identity to a personal, informal identity. For 62% of the student-participants, those who had lived in the UAE before their studies, their residence in the country was dependent on their parents’ work visas. Thus, family was a formal category that was institutionalized as an identity in relation to the state, as the centre column indicates (Figure 14).
Furthermore, family was consistently selected by students as the most important identity. Many spoke of giving back to their parents to thank them for all their support. Yet within the IBC students’ families had little acknowledgment. As Bhima explained, though her family was still important, their role had changed. She had become increasingly responsible for her own decisions as she progressed through university.

Bhima (Dubai): The way that I tend to take my decisions now and the way I tend to take them before have become completely different and there has been this kind of disinvolved [from my family]. And there are things that I can’t really explain to them because they wouldn’t really do. Or maybe that’s the way I see it, that they wouldn’t understand. And then there are things in their viewpoint that their experience, that they are still trying to teach me but really isn’t applicable to the world as I see it today.

A decrease in family involvement, as adolescents develop into independent adults through university, is not unique to the UAE. But the process of “disinvolved,” as Bhima called it, is particularly complicated in the UAE. The majority of students live with their parents, are financially supported by their parents, and for many of the young women, still reside as dependents on their parents’ visas. However, few IBCs acknowledge the strong influence and connection students have with their parents while at the IBC. This shift, as the formal family identity changes to a personal identity, is a challenge for students.

Gender. Perhaps the most challenging identity shift, although one experienced by comparatively few students, was the change in gender roles and expectations once at the IBC. For many young women, gender identity was institutionalized by UAE visa policies and an ethnic community that reinforced their position as daughters. Figure 14 presents this identity as formal, institutional as well as social, informal. As women’s gender identity diminished in importance at the IBC, the home conflict related to this shift increased. The IBC was implicitly communicating a message that women were free to pursue any career they wished, but this was simply not the case for many women from Arab and South Asian families. Since the IBC fostered a new “career-oriented” identity for these women and developed their sense of professional purpose, new conflicts emerged at home with their parents who hoped their daughters would marry shortly after graduation. The IBC priorities were in direct conflict with their position as women and daughters. This tension also fostered a new identity among some of these women as “feminists” since they felt held back as women and driven to fight for the future they wanted.
This gender identity challenge that many South Asian and Arab women faced at IBCs was heightened by two factors. First, the IBC provided no space to address this and more than one participant said she had signed up for this study in order to discuss this challenge. Presently, when augmenting their operations, IBCs begin by funding student clubs rather than student services. More counselling spaces are needed to help students successfully navigate these identity challenges.

The second factor was the ambivalence of the family and ethnic community toward the women’s academic and professional roles. All the women in this study were fully supported financially by their parents and many expressed the importance, to their family, of pursuing higher education. Many were planning on completing a Master’s degree. The women faced significant pressure to perform academically while at the same time facing pressure to marry shortly after their degree. This ambivalence, combined with an IBC that did not acknowledge their restricted gender roles but prepared them for careers, caused significant identity challenges for these women.

**Summary**

At the Western, branch-campuses in the UAE, students faced a new set of identity priorities that differed from those of the surrounding context. Family and gender were repositioned, moving from institutionalized, formal identities to informal, personal identities. This repositioning led to new conflicts at home for several students. The strong, institutionalized influence of citizenship was entirely removed at the IBC. Nevertheless, students formed friendship groups along regional or linguistic lines. New identities were fostered for several women as they became career-oriented and feminists in response to the challenges to their gender identities. The new professional, leader identity, so central to the IBC, and common to both the UAE and Malaysia, is discussed in more detail below.

**Identity Priorities in Malaysia: Host Context vs. IBC**

The CII below (Figure 15) illustrates the shift in identity priorities from the surrounding Malaysian context to the IBC. The sections below discuss the significance of Ethnicity, Ethnic Languages, Individual Academic Ability and Family as they were repositioned by the IBC.
Figure 15: Comparison of identity in the broader Malaysian context and within the IBC

*Ethnic affiliation, regional affiliation and languages.* In Malaysia, for the 67% of students who held Malaysian citizenship, ethnic group and ethnic language were distinguishing features of primary and secondary education. Furthermore, several students had enrolled in the IBC because they did not have access to public higher education due to their ethnicity. When asked about identity at the IBC, students perceived the IBC as a place in which ethnic divisions, so central to the social and political discourse of Malaysia, were less visible. Several students had intentionally enrolled in the IBC to move away from these ethnic stereotypes that they considered to be limiting. Of the remaining 23% of students, those who had moved to Malaysia to attend the IBC, most had attended a mono-ethnic high school in their home country and also perceived that the IBC did not prioritize their ethnic identities. Figure 15 indicates that the institutionalized identity divisions related to ethnicity or ethnic language, diminish at the IBC.

While the emphasis on ethnicity and ethnic language decreased in comparison to the surrounding context, identity categories were still very influential in determining students’ friendship group. Rather than socializing only with those from their ethnic group (for example Malaysian-Indian) students found themselves making friends along regional lines (South Asian, South-east Asian, African).
This broadening of identity boundaries also seemed to be reflected in the languages around which students formed friendships.

*Individual academic.* Many students in Malaysia described the intensely competitive, exam-based curriculum of their secondary schools. They were also quick to mention their parents’ expectation that they achieve academically. These pressures had prioritized, outside the IBC, an identity related to their individual, academic ability or what Stephanie in Malaysia referred to as the ‘Kumon’ student, referring to the Kumon method of academic tutoring. In Figure 15, the absence of this individual, academic identity in the IBC column is significant. The IBC diminished this identity entirely, instead prioritizing leadership skills students developed through group assignments.

*Family.* The Malaysian students who participated in this study did not describe the same tension in their family life as those studying in the UAE. They indicated that the family pressure many of them experienced to perform academically seemed to remain the same or diminish slightly at the IBC. Figure 15 shifts *family* from an informal, social identity to a personal identity once students are in the IBC.

*Comparing the UAE and Malaysia*

Figure 16 (below) distills the findings of Chapter Six, showing, by category, the main identities students indicated were important in their IBC experiences in the UAE and Malaysia.
Figure 16: Overall positioning of identities within an IBC: Comparison of the UAE and Malaysia

**Leader.** Although the student-participants had different experiences at the IBC, all shared one entirely new experience: working in groups. In both the UAE and Malaysia, students described secondary school experiences of exam-based rote learning, evaluated by individual performance. In each year of the IBC business degree students found themselves in groups, working together on assignments. Moreover, students were encouraged to take on leadership roles in the groups, forcing them to interact in new ways with their peers. Most of the students who indicated they had been a leader in their group seemed proud of their accomplishments as they described the confidence and new skills they had developed. Leadership skills were an intentional outcome of the IBC curriculum and fostered a new leader identity most students had not acquired before.

There are, arguably, many identities students can acquire at university linked to their newly acquired abilities. However, developing leadership abilities, and a leader identity, is distinct from many other skills because the role of leader inextricably connects them to their peers. Students do not acquire this ability in isolation but in relationship to those they lead. Thus, leadership ability is not just a personal attribute but, at IBCs, is an institutionalized identity necessary for success.

**Professional and career-oriented.** Closely linked with students’ leadership identity was a new sense of becoming a professional or “career-oriented” individual. The students entered the IBC and adopted Western-style leadership skills with the aim of becoming professionals in the business sector. In the American university context, scholars have explored the process of students’ developing professional and leadership identities (Komives, et al., 2005; Lamote & Engels, 2010). These studies confirm that university is an important time for developing professional identities in students. However, the IBC experience is different from the American experience. The IBCs enroll a critical mass of students who have only experienced non-Western forms of pedagogy prior to attending the IBC. The group-based pedagogy of the IBC, so different from their high school experience, and the diversity of the campus, heighten the significance of success for those students who are able to acquire these professional and leadership identities. There develops a distinct social divide between those who are able to thrive by acquiring these identities and those who are not.

Moreover, the women students in the UAE described the process of developing a “career-oriented” identity that set them apart from their peers and created conflict with their families and
ethnic communities. These women face many challenges as they work toward leadership and professional identities that will enable them to succeed in the IBC and later in the business sector.

*English speaker.* In Malaysia, as Figure 16 indicates, students’ success in developing a professional, leader identity was strongly linked to their English language ability. This thesis found that students at IBCs in Malaysia had a much greater range of English proficiency than their counterparts in the UAE who had mainly attended English primary and secondary schools. In contrast, the identity politics of Malaysia, with the stark divide between Malay-language and Chinese-language schools, resulted in few students attending English secondary schools. In support of this interesting finding is Hsieh’s (2006) research that suggests Chinese speakers generally have more difficulty learning English than other ethnic groups. Many of the students in this study who spoke a Chinese dialect as their first language exhibited difficulty conversing in the interviews. Thus, in Malaysia’s IBC business programs which are offered exclusively in English, language challenges were a significant barrier to students’ success.

Students were very aware language ability was important to their success. Several described the lengths they had gone to to improve their English while others spoke with pride about their ability to speak multiple languages, particularly those outside of their ethnic group. English language proficiency, like leadership and career development, was an identity students continually worked toward. As Gloria, an Indonesian-Chinese woman, studying in Malaysia, said:

I think language should be a continuous learning process. Because language is the – for example you are meeting a new friends and it is from the language and the gestures from this somebody that you actually know the personality, the first impression.

*Regional and ethnic friendships.* In both the UAE and Malaysia students perceived that the ethnic divisions of the surrounding context were diminished within the IBC. However, as several hours of observation confirmed, students still mainly chose friends from, what can be termed, their region. In the UAE this meant students generally grouped together with those from the broader geographic region of the country in which they held citizenship. In Malaysia, the situation was more complex. The 67% of students who held Malaysian citizenship were affiliated with a specific ethnic group (Malay, Chinese or Indian). These students were at least third generation Malaysian and had little affiliation with the region or origin connected to their ethnic group. Yet they mainly associated, for example, with other students
from the Chinese diaspora (Malaysian-Chinese, Vietnamese-Chinese, Indonesian-Chinese). This revealed the strength of students’ regional affiliation and related language.

Group work. The explicit aim of working in groups was to develop students’ leadership skills. Yet students indicated that working in groups also highlighted divisive identity categories related to ethnic or linguistic groups. When working in groups, students encountered different work habits and when conflict arose they were quick to associate particular habits with a particular ethnic or regional group. Group work also tended to divide students according to their abilities, separating out those who had the necessary leadership or language skills from those who did not. The divisive potential of unmediated group work was seen in both the UAE and Malaysia.

Family and gender. As the above sections outline, family was consistently selected as the most important identity for students in the UAE and Malaysia. In both countries students indicated that their family identity diminished in importance at the IBC. However, students in the UAE placed more emphasis on the diminished influence of family than those in Malaysia. Higher education identity research suggests that students can hold multiple identities at once, yet there are still circumstances in which particular identities come into conflict with one another (Jones & Abes, 2013). Likewise, several students did suggest that studying at an IBC changed their perspective on gender or family and created conflict at home. Here again, the IBC provided no space to discuss the conflicts created by the repositioning of these identities.

The above CII charts have been developed based on students’ perceptions and descriptions of their IBC experience in order to illustrate what types of identities are prioritized at the IBC in comparison to the surrounding national context. The following sections consider what these new priorities mean for students, institutions and the nations that host them.

Section 2: What does this mean for students?
Chapters Seven presented five themes, drawn out of the interview data, which represent five ways in which identity is influenced at an IBC. Figure 11 below revisits these themes.
The processes that these themes represent do not stand alone. Each is related to the others and are often experienced by students simultaneously as different dimensions of their overall identity change during university. The central, most overt identity change, one that is explicitly promoted by the IBC, relates to Theme 2: New Identities. These new identities, prioritized as essential by the IBC, are linked to students’ ability to speak English, lead their peers, and strategize business problems. The other four themes interact with each other in relationship to the new identities promoted by the IBC. The implications of these processes are discussed in the sections below, questioning why students view the IBC as identity-free, describing how students respond to the IBC priorities, exploring the skill-based nature of their new identities and the possibilities these offer to students in the working world.

**Identity-free IBC: Problem or Solution?**

Despite later evidence to the contrary, students initially perceived the IBC to be an institution that did not differentiate between them based on the classic identity categories of ethnicity, religion, gender or language that were so central to the surrounding communities. This thesis is not the first study to present this sort of finding. Related studies on Malaysia and the UAE have confirmed that divisive identities related to ethnicity decrease for students through study at an IBC (Sidhu and Christie, 2014; Vora, 2013). Currently, however, there is no consensus among scholars on what this finding means for
students and whether to applaud or condemn the ability of IBCs to diminish ethnic identities. Different authors come to very different conclusions in their analyses. For example, although Vora (2014) confirms that students view the international campus as an “egalitarian” space, she concludes, quite critically, that Western-style universities are in fact perpetuating Western, neoliberal citizens who engage in a particular form of market-driven business. She states:

The university experience was one of dissonance and rupture between the parochialized forms of education that South Asian youth went through in primary and secondary school and the multi-cultural and supposedly egalitarian platform of the Western university, where they received liberal, neoliberal and “global” forms of citizenship training...” (p. 147).

Furthermore she suggests that:

American-style universities provide training for neoliberal forms of global citizenship, in which “calculative individuals” learn skills to succeed in the market, (p. 162).

Vora’s critical, neo-Marxist approach complements scholarship on academic capitalism which has been explored in depth by scholars Slaughter and Rhoades (2004; Rhoades & Slaughter, 2006). They argue that in the current global political economy the interests of the nation-states are less important than the demands of the global market and higher education systems have adapted to this new context. In contrast to non-profit, subsidized universities, for-profit universities create services and products tailored to the demand of global consumers. Vora’s argument aligns with this approach by suggesting foreign higher education develops students into global consumers who thrive in this market-driven world and continue to perpetuate the system. Although Vora is also critical of the mono-ethnic primary and secondary schools and their “parochial” forms of education, she does not see IBCs as the solution but rather as an alternative evil.

A very different perspective is presented in Sidhu and Christie’s (2014) research on Malaysian IBCs. Their case study examines Monash University Malaysia (MUM), whose mandate for operation is directly related to the Sunway Group’s business interests in the region. The ties between university and business that are so critiqued by Vora, are epitomized in the case of MUM, yet Sidhu and Christie conclude that IBCs offers new egalitarian spaces that have the potential to overcome the local ethnic divisions.
They ask:

Who benefits from MUM (Monash University Malaysia) and who is excluded from spaces like MUM? And can the campus foster the cosmopolitan and post-racial imaginaries and solidarities that it gestures toward despite its location in a place where ethnic politics affects every aspect of social and economic life including access to education? (p. 183)

In this view, the threat to progressive society is the ethnic politics of Malaysia and the potential solution is the egalitarian space of an IBC. They do not conclude, as Vora does, with a critique of the market-driven, business focus of IBCs.

The position of students at IBCs has not yet reached the post-racial equality that Sidhu and Christie (2014) hope for, but nor is it so bleak and witless as Vora suggests. Rather, the former’s suggestions of egalitarianism are overstated while Vora’s perspective on students’ agency is understated. Although students initially perceived the IBC as an Identity-free space, this perception was quickly modified as students described the interpersonal challenges they faced during their degree studies. Many recounted conflicts they faced in group work or in their homes, brought about by the limits their linguistic or gender identities placed on their ability to achieve the new identities. Students’ imprecise perception of the IBC as identity-free appeared to be contingent on the presence of interpersonal conflict. When students succeeded academically and steadily moved toward their new English-speaking leader identities, the IBC appeared to be an identity-free space based solely on merit. However, when students faced difficulties working together in groups or when family or gender restrictions limit their ability to achieve these new identities, they experienced the IBC as causing divisions and highlighting contentious identities.

Responding to the New Identities: Four Types of IBC Students

Students enrolled in IBCs in the UAE and Malaysia respond in different ways to the new skill-based identities they see prioritized at the IBC. Some students embrace the challenge of the IBC, thriving as group leaders, while others feel uncertain of their abilities and gradually retreat into their ethnic and linguistic identities. The data from the previous chapter can be used to describe four different ways in which students interact with the IBC. Table 16 below compares four ideal types of students: the high-skill worker, the high-skill critical thinker, the low-skill cynic and the low-skill worker.

Table 16: Four Types of Students at IBCs
First, are the students this thesis calls the high-skill workers, those who fit Vora’s description of the neo-liberal global citizen. These students are able to achieve the identities promoted by the IBC. They are highly skilled at English and are quick to take on the leadership role in group work. They become well positioned to enter the business sector after graduating and view their new professional identity as superseding their old ethnic identities. In the classroom these students adopt the language of critical thinking to succeed in their assignments. However, their critical thinking mainly involves developing original business strategies and presenting them analytically. They rarely question the structures of the IBC, instead working hard to succeed within them.

Second, are the high-skill critical thinkers. Fortunately, the majority of students who volunteered for this study were attempting to construct identities that bridged the local and global, considering their valued, inherent identities while pursuing marketable identities related to their professional skills. These students are actively trying to balance the expected identities of the IBC with their inherent identities such as family and gender for which the IBC provided little space. Students were adamant that family was the most important identity and many were actively maintaining their family relationships in their private lives even where these were in conflict with the identities promoted by the IBC. Though the IBCs offered little space to address this conflict, students were finding space – like participation in this study – to think about their identity journeys more deeply.

Many of these students were highly skilled at language learning and were intentionally learning a language other than English that allowed them to connect with a new peer group. This moved them outside of the regional language identities that defined much of the informal social interaction at the IBC.
and outside the English-speaker identity that dominated the classroom as well. Several of these students were very aware of the IBCs potential to sort groups by language and conversed critically about the IBC context. Many were attempting to move beyond these structures through language learning or involvement in extra-curricular activities.

Sadly, there are students who are unable to develop the new language or leadership identities promoted by the IBC business programs. Although these students were the minority in this study, they were perpetually outside the English-leader paradigm of the IBC. They spoke of taking leadership roles only when their group members spoke their language of proficiency and they rarely participated in class discussions in English. In Table 16 the bottom row suggests two categories of low-skilled students. First are those who view their experience at the IBC through a critical lens and are very cynical of the Western-style education that does not recognize their family or ethnic group prestige. These students blamed the IBC for their failure and made some suggestions for improvement such as more language instruction and counselling services.

The fourth and final group are low-skill students who did not question the IBC structures and placed the full weight of their failure on their own lack of skills. These students viewed themselves as the problem while still affirming the values of IBC.

**Acquired Identities: The Burden of Individual Achievement**

The above descriptions offer four typical ways in which students respond to the identity priorities of the IBC. The essence of these new priorities represents a fundamental shift from inherent to acquired identities. The new identities that are formally prioritized by the IBC are related to the acquisition of new skills. As the curriculum at the IBC requires students to advance their English language and leadership skills, successful students take on new identities as leaders and English speakers. These new identities are assumed to supersede the ethnic political identities in the contexts around them.

Leadership and English speaking identities differ from previously inherent identities such as citizenship, ethnicity or gender in that the burden is placed on the individual student to be the agent of their own identity construction. This is part of a broader global trend explored by European identity scholars Bauman (2001), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002). Bauman says of identity construction:

No more was it seen, no more could it be seen, as ‘given.’ Instead, it turned into a task and a task which every man and woman had no choice but to face up to and perform to the best of their ability. ‘Predestination’ was replaced with the ‘life project,’ fate with vocation.
– and a ‘human nature’ into which one was born was replaced with ‘identity’ which one needs to saw up and make fit, (p. 3).

Bauman’s (2001) critique of globalization and the burden it places on individuals to acquire and advance their own identities is the cause of what he calls “chronically disembedded” individuals who face a lifetime of forging their identities where previously these were given to them and embedded in broader political and social institutions.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) complement this perspective in their writing on Institutionalized Individualism. They ask, “which new modes of life are coming into being where the old ones, ordained by religion or the state are breaking down?” (2). They suggest that “individuals must, in part, supply them for themselves, import them into their own biographies through their own action,” because “God, nature and the social system are gradually being replaced by the individual as the cause/reason,” (p.21).

In the UAE and Malaysia, the ultimate responsibility lies with the students to construct for themselves marketable identities that will ensure their success in the global business world. In this vision of social life, Western IBCs imported into non-Western settings are a formative and necessary institution. They provide students with a means to forge their own identities in a globalizing world where traditional, predefined identities are less certain. The IBC provides space for successful students to develop a global identity linked to skills and abilities through which they will gain access into the national and global business sector.

As the IBC becomes the central space in which students develop their own identities, their inherent or traditional identities become less visible. Yet these inherent identities are often linked to students’ success or failure in achieving the new marketable identities at the IBC. A student has little chance of being an English-speaking, business leader if their groupmates refuse to work with them in English or if family pressures inhibit their achievement. Thus, students find themselves at the IBC, presented with new, skill-based identities they must achieve, yet needing to understand how their inherent identities contribute to their skill development. As the following section suggests, IBCs might benefit from additional programming to make these processes of identity change more explicit and support students’ integration of multiple identities as they study at an IBC.
Section 3: What does this mean for institutions?

Unintended Identity Change and the Meritocratic Blind

Branch-campuses are mainly commercial enterprises with the primary goal of making a profit and the secondary goals of strengthening their global reputation and developing market-relevant skills in their students (Wilkins & Huisman, 2013). Yet their classrooms and student hubs are home to significant identity change, little of which is thoughtfully addressed within the IBC programming. Students may develop new friendships or make new enemies along linguistic divides, ethnic stereotypes may be perpetuated or overcome in group work, but there are few reflective or debriefing spaces designed to further students’ mutual respect and understanding.

At present there seems to be the general assumption that Western institutions bring the Western liberal value of a meritocracy, providing a level playing field where ability rather than ethnicity, gender or religion, allows one to advance. Indeed, Neave has argued that the “principle of meritocracy” was a significant step in the maturation of the university in Europe, (2001, p. 30). Thus, as IBCs offer another wave of transporting the Western university abroad, assumptions of these institutions as meritocracies is not surprising. Nick’s (Malaysia) suggestion, that the IBC had made him more concerned with people’s “capabilities” rather than their ethnic group, appears to support the meritocracy idea.

Arguably, if IBCs are the meritocracy they are assumed to be, there is little need to facilitate the interactions of diverse student groups. Instead, students’ engagement with the subject matter, learning about the global business world, exists on a level above divisive identities. Yet according to the majority of students in this study, this is simply not the case. The identity-complex contexts into which the IBCs have been imported have a significant impact on the classroom and students’ interactions. As students worked in groups and faced areas of discord they remained quick to evaluate each other’s performances based on ethnicity and language. Also, students made friends mainly with those in their own language group despite their perception that they were making friends with “everyone.”

However, the recurring belief in the IBC as a meritocracy acts as a blind preventing students from exploring the deeply rooted identities that divide them. For institutions, this meritocratic blind prevents important questions about who succeeds in acquiring the new skill-based identities and who does not. If ethnic, linguistic and gender divisions are continually exacerbated when working in groups, it seems more likely that students’ inherent identities, and their previous experiences with them, are
related to their success. The example of women in the UAE illustrates the importance of removing the meritocratic blind. All of the women students in the UAE who participated in this study had the linguistic and academic skills necessary to acquire the new identities promoted by the IBC. However, the community and family expectations related to their gender roles threatened their development into English-speaking business leaders. Furthermore, the women were deeply committed to their families which heightened the tension they felt. The solution is not the perfection of a true meritocracy that ignores all other divisions. Instead, the functional myths associated with the IBC – the institution as an equal space and a meritocracy - need to be challenged for two reasons. First, a simplistic meritocracy does not contribute to equity among students, since it only guarantees the success of those who are capable. Second, students’ diverse identities cannot be brushed aside since they are deeply ingrained and are the lenses through which students see themselves and others. Instead, students need explicit, guided facilitation throughout their degrees that will enable them to work across the ethnic and linguistic divides that are so pervasive in their surrounding context and reproduced in their IBC experience.

*Foundation Year: Spaces for Identity Facilitation*

Fortunately, within the broader programming at IBCs there is potential for institutions to guide students in their self-understanding and in their ability to work across ethnic or linguistic boundaries. In both the UAE and Malaysia students complete a mandatory foundation or college year before enrolling in their degree program. This foundation year is one of the few reflective spaces students described in their interviews. In the foundation year students were able to discuss broader life-questions related to culture and philosophy. These life-questions were incorporated into the main curriculum of the foundation year through courses such as law, psychology, philosophy, cross-cultural management, and Islamic culture. Several students suggested these courses were transformational.

Priti (Dubai): And they’ve made it compulsory so all of us have to do the ethics and psychology and philosophy. And it teaches you about schizophrenia and the utilitarianism rule and Kantelism. And especially something like the golden rule where you learn that whatever you do to others - how would you feel if it was universalized and everything like that... We have 10 general subjects that everyone has to do. I think it really opens up your mind.
Ryan (Malaysia): …We sort of learn about these theories, or lenses to look at things, how to interpret texts. One of it would be the feminist lens. That is where I actually did a coursework on it. So to read about some paper, some writers, like Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault, so to understand how the society perceived those things. So like, I’ve been exposed to post-structuralism. So these things I think has always been very important to me since then, to look at the society in a different light.

Aya (Dubai): We have a course called cross-cultural management. And really it is the best best best best course I have ever done in my life. Like without taking it I would never, I don’t think I would go in my career path. Really the book and lecture and the slides are really amazing. For me I’m stubborn. Once I have it I stick to it. I had a fight with a colleague last year because of an assignment – I had an idea and she had an idea. ‘This is the last time I’m going to do work with you.’ But this course it really changed my mind. I have to give up some points and stick to some points. Listen to some people and give them a chance. It is not only me in this world. But if I’m working alone I can do whatever I want, but if you’re in a group you have to listen and understand, adapt, adjust. It is amazing, I love this course.

The above quotes express students’ enthusiasm for the subjects they encountered during their foundation year. Unfortunately, after the foundation year students move into a degree program that offers solely business courses such as finance, marketing, accounting and human resources. Many of the women interviewed in Dubai suggested that the conflicts with their family around gender identities and expectations occurred in the latter years of their degree program. The transformational content of the foundation year was too early in their degree program to help with that particular challenge. Branch-campuses need to integrate elements from the foundation year into each of the subsequent years of their business programs. Despite a lack of explicit facilitation, students are attempting to bridge identity categories and IBCs can empower them to do this in a way that brings diverse communities to a greater mutual understanding. As the students’ quotes above attest, there is transformative potential in exploring some of the literature related to larger life-questions. Integrating this into the business curriculum each year might allow IBCs to benefit from the diverse identities that shape students interaction and academic achievement.
Section 4: What does this mean for the host nations?

IBC as Buffer Zones

Although IBCs contribute significantly to their host countries by providing access for the growing middle class and training for the labour market, currently they are not designed for, and have little mission to, improve the ethnic divisions that exist in those nations. Sidhu and Christie’s (2014) suggestion in Section Two, that Western values of equality are transmitted through the IBC to promote a “post-racial” space, is too simplistic. Rather, the position of IBCs in these nations lends itself to a neo-Marxist critique suggesting that IBCs are a buffer between marginalized communities and the governments that place limits on them. Instead of contributing to the removal of identity divisions in their host nations, IBCs in their current form emphasize the growing division between the economy and national politics in nations like the UAE and Malaysia. This critical view of IBCs’ relationship to their host nation is a natural fit given their position in countries with burgeoning capitalist market economies but significant social divisions in the population. The concept of buffer zones is borrowed from Kivel (2007) who suggests certain policies act as cushioning spaces between powerful authorities and marginalized labour, perpetuating an unequal class system by placating the marginalized (Kivel, 2007). In this Gramscian analysis, IBCs can be seen as institutional buffer zones, filling the gap in higher education supply that has been created by the unequal identity politics in the UAE and Malaysia. Branch-campuses offer an alternative path by which peripheral minority groups can access education, bypassing the ethnic-based restrictions of the state and participating in the economic sector. However, the political agency of wealthy minority groups is not improved by IBCs. Instead IBCs act as a buffer zone, a space that provides minority groups with the education they desire, preventing them from questioning the broader system that maintains their peripheral position in the political processes of the country. The separation between politics and economics, and the ethnic divisions associated with each, is maintained with unintended support from the IBCs.

Disembedded Universities

This critical reading of IBCs offers a new perspective on the role of universities in an era of global capital. These institutions are not embedded in their national or local context. Instead they support a divide between the economic and socio-political spheres, doing little to bond disparate groups in the host nations. Returning to Neave’s argument, this is a new position for the university, an institution that has historically had strong ties to its national or local context since the 17th Century (Neave, 2001). Neave’s
primary analysis focuses on Europe, exploring how the medieval universities changed to became central to the newly formed states. He describes,

...The incorporation of the university into the coordinating ambit of the state, both as a symbol and as a repository of national identity, as an instrument for the preservation of the nation’s culture, (p.7).

Universities in Europe had an “...implicit obligation of service to the national community,” (p. 26). Later in Neave’s analysis he briefly references the American context in which the university was embedded in the local rather than national community and was governed accordingly. In both contexts, the university is tightly linked to the surrounding political or social community.

In stark contrast to these depictions of the Western university, the IBCs in the UAE and Malaysia are part of an economic sector that is increasingly detached from its national political context or local community. The dominance of business degrees, the primacy of English in the classroom and the focus on developing leadership skills, all aim to situate students successfully in the economy but offer little in terms of national identity or cultural or political involvement. Instead, IBCs are spaces in which students forge their own acquired identities related to profession and detach, at least temporarily, from their given or traditional identities. Bauman’s (2001) psycho-social analysis identifies the students as “chronically disembedded individuals,” and there is little sense that IBCs have any role in altering that position. Rather the host nations have themselves, in the Polanyian sense, experienced a disembedding of their economies (Polanyi, 1944) and IBCs merely provide the complementary labour. The world described by Neave has vanished as the university disembeds from the national community to which it was such an integral part. Vora’s assessment of the IBC is not far off, though as the section above suggests, students have some agency and many think critically as they respond to this disembedding. Both the UAE and Malaysia would benefit from an intentionally developed bridging discourse that draws together their diverse communities and links them in some way as a national community. The IBCs, and higher education sectors more broadly, should be brought into this process and should become more cognisant of their important role in helping young adults develop their identities.

In the UAE, where the majority of residents do not have citizenship, there is little reason to expect an IBC to contribute to national identity formation. Yet, as the conclusion of Chapter Five argued, recent economic downturns have eroded the UAE’s post-secondary sector specifically because of the country’s narrow definition of citizenship. In the UAE, IBCs are part of a system in which
expatriates enter the country to work with little obligation to stay and contribute. Students described the connection and loyalty they have to their ethnic communities, which are much stronger than any sense of belonging to the UAE. Universities, even IBCs, can begin to change this. Scholarship has shown that universities, and their international networks, can be designed to tackle social development concerns (Chapman, et. al., 2015). They can also be ideal sites where the diverse groups mix and begin to develop some sense of collective identity. New narratives of belonging, perhaps rooted in social outreach, could be promoted by UAE leaders in order to build a community that has reason to stay in the midst of economic struggles. This may support the UAE, allowing it to remain strong in post-oil existence that is rooted in an educated, loyal community.

In Malaysia, where citizenship is more widely available, the struggle is for political representation for all groups. Currently, IBCs are educating young adults to enter a business sector that is detached from the political arena. In their interviews, students articulated little explicit loyalty to Malaysia as a nation, yet none spoke of emigrating. Their unconscious commitment to the nation is strong, and it seems a small step to teach business students how the economy is indeed linked to its social and political context. The higher education sector, including IBCs, need to support the ambitious goals of Malaysia’s Vision 2020, intent on fostering new understandings of national identity that integrate politics and economics.

Conclusion
The repositioning of students’ identities during university is never a simple process. In identity-complex contexts such as the UAE and Malaysia, this process involves the interaction of Western curriculum, diverse student groups and a significant shift from inherent to acquired identities. Students applaud their IBCs for being less identity-divisive than the surrounding communities, yet in both countries students still describe the divisive categories that emerge as they work together in groups or socialize informally. There is much that is good at IBCs from the foundation year curriculum to the self-confidence students gain when taking on leadership roles. However, students are craving meaningful, guided facilitation of their experiences as they wrestle with what it means to become professional, business leaders within a socially complex environment. University administrations, or the governments that host them, need to rediscover the potential of IBCs, and higher education in general, to strengthen societies in which the economic sector has outgrown its social foundations.
For centuries, higher education has influenced identity: individuals, groups, the powerful and the marginalized. As people journeyed from adolescence to adulthood, higher education beckoned; an institutional authority telling them what they could be and how they could be it. But higher education in this century is different. Life is faster and the world is smaller. Institutions are constantly experimenting with new delivery models, designing programs to suit a diverse range of students. Private, public, local, foreign – joint ventures of all types – the variations seem endless. For emerging economies, this assortment of providers is a welcome development. New institutions enter the market, shifting and adapting to meet the demand of the growing middle class, providing access for previously excluded groups. But when these providers come from abroad - bringing non-local programs, curriculum, pedagogy - what then of identity? How might they develop, categorize, or position their students?

Particularly intriguing are countries that recruit foreign providers to educate their paradoxical minorities, those with little political agency, but significant financial means. This is the perplexing situation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia. Foreign providers have established successful universities that mainly educate large minority groups. These minority groups have traditionally been excluded from public institutions and related narratives of belonging in the country. However, these groups have succeeded financially in the burgeoning business sectors and can pay for private education. They enroll in foreign higher education, those international branch-campuses (IBCs) that promise to open the world to them, to diminish restrictive identities and develop these students into global business leaders.

Study Overview
For the past five years, I have considered the distinct modes of cross-border higher education in the UAE and Malaysia, asking how students’ identities are altered as they work toward their degree at an IBC. I visited both countries, met with students, sat in their classes and invited them to interviews. They were ready and eager to tell me their stories. Most were part of these paradoxical minority groups. They had
been continually categorized by their ethnic or linguistic identities and they understood how these limited their education and career options. Those who did not directly belong to a marginalized group still described their experiences with divisive identities. Yet, as the various students described their time at an IBC, it was clear that their experiences pivoted around a different set of identity categories than those that defined them in the broader national context.

Summary of Findings

The majority of IBCs that are imported to the UAE and Malaysia, from the UK and Australia, teach business, and they teach it in ways that are entirely new for their students. Group work, problem-solving, peer leadership, and oral presentations all disrupt the previous modes of learning students have encountered that were primarily centred on examinations. When students succeed at these new forms of learning, they acquire the new identities that are fostered by the IBC. These are related to their ability as English-speaking business leaders. Many applaud the IBC as an identity-free space that does not differentiate between students, but ability is the new divider that separates successful students from the unsuccessful. And when group work presents new challenges, rifts emerge. Students are quick to interpret their peers’ unwelcome behavior according to the familiar ethnic stereotypes. Students with limited language skills feel isolated and decrease their involvement. Women feel pressured to over perform and encounter new conflicts at home. A new identity is held up and divisive identities fester down below. These identity processes were central findings in this thesis research and they raise a number of new questions that require attention.

Contributions to CBHE, Student Development, Identity

This thesis has taken an exploratory approach to the study of students’ identities at international branch-campuses. Using flexible, qualitative interviews, covering a broad range of topics, the findings illuminated several key areas of identity change for students. As such, the findings have led to new lines of inquiry rather than concrete conclusions. Furthermore, the program for which I am writing this thesis is Higher Education. While Education is said to be interdisciplinary, I would argue that Higher Education is omni-disciplinary. Not only do we draw on a range of fields as we conduct our research, but every other field at some point becomes part of our research. Thus, my study contributes to three knowledge areas, each of which is embedded, field within field, in broader subjects. The main thrust of this research contributes to scholarship on Cross-border Higher Education and College Student
Development, both of which are part of the field of Higher Education. There are also a considerable number of elements in Chapter Three, including the development of the CII, that contribute to social science identity research more broadly. The concluding thoughts I articulate below further these three research areas, describing new lines of inquiry that flow out of this study. These concluding thoughts will be of most interest to key stakeholders of cross-border higher education: those who recruit IBCs, those who monitor their impact on receiving populations, those who develop IBC programs, those who support IBCs students and those who, like me, research them.

Program Research
The most immediate question in my mind as I reflect on the findings of this study is: how might IBCs design group work assignments to improve the likelihood students will respect and value each other at the end of their time working together? This study found that the conflicts students encounter during group work often highlight divisive identities. There needs to be in depth research on how different aspects and understandings of group-based pedagogy impact the interactions between diverse individuals. Ideally, a study of this nature would examine the impact on students during higher education and in their early career years. Currently, the nascent research on teaching and learning in the Gulf (Telafici, Martinez and Telafici, 2014) provides a helpful starting point and could be expanded to consider how students learn and how instructors teach at IBCs in other higher education hubs. There is so much more to know about how teaching and learning practices in CBHE support or challenge students’ identities.

This thesis also highlighted the importance of language and linguistic identities at IBCs. This raises the question of how to move beyond the exclusive use of English at IBCs. It would be interesting to explore emergent notions of plurilingualism that are being developed at lower levels of education, and consider how IBCs, and higher education in general, might help integrate students’ multiple languages as assets in their studies. Traditionally, language study at university has focused on the development of skills, under an expert-learner model. However, IBCs are already disrupting the expert-learner model in their business pedagogy by focusing on group-directed, problem solving. This new approach may offer insight on how to integrate multiple languages by inviting students to be the experts. This area of research might broaden the debates on language use in both the UAE and Malaysia that are too often polarized around choosing one exclusive language of instruction.
Another important finding in this study is that some students do not succeed because of particular limitations they face related to their identities. There is a serious need for research that listens to the stories of unsuccessful students, those who do not achieve the IBC ideal of the English-speaking, business leader. The meritocratic blind suggests that students fail because they are not able to acquire the necessary skills, but this thesis suggests that lack of ability is merely a symptom of more complex issues that require investigation. It would be beneficial to have empirical research on the factors influencing student success and retention at IBCs as these are surely different from those in the country of origin.

In Malaysia, several student participants referenced their participation in an extra-curricular club that organizes volunteer service terms for university students in Southeast Asia. Although there is much Western research on service learning and exchange programs that originate in Western countries, it would be helpful to understand the nature of similar program in Southeast Asia. An investigation of these sorts of programs might ask whether they contribute to a sense of Asian identity, how social outreach is understood and if or how they interface with traditional authorities such as the nation-state or large-scale development NGOs.

Perhaps the most pressing question for me, as I conclude this thesis, is how can institutions in the UAE support female students and their families, encouraging them to journey together as young women embark on their career paths? Women at IBCs are torn between a deep love of their families and a growing love of the new person they are becoming at university. There needs to be sensitive and thoughtful research on how women students at IBCs in the Gulf, and their families, respond to the growing tension between career and family obligation. It would be important, within such a study, to compare the diverse meaning attributed to being a woman in the different contexts that host IBCs. Ideally, a study would examine the relationships between higher education and gender roles extending into women’s early career years.

**Context Research**

One of the most intriguing findings of this thesis is that students’ ethnic and linguistic identities are highlighted, often in negative ways, through working in groups. It would be fascinating to know if this trend is mirrored in workplaces. A study might examine how collaborative, Western-styles of business management highlight or diminish inherent identities. Such an inquiry would certainly not need to be
limited to the UAE and Malaysia. Any country would suffice which has a diverse population, complex narratives of belonging and the growing ideal of collaboratively achieved, workplace outcomes.

One area of investigation that this thesis did not pursue in any depth, was students’ plans for mobility. In the UAE, only a few students discussed their plans to emigrate, and in Malaysia there were none who did. It would be very interesting to look at the mobility patterns and aspirations of students at IBCs and if these relate to their pursuit of higher education or choice of institution. Such a study might consider, for example, the migration pipelines between India, the Gulf and the North America, and how different forms of CBHE are used by different students.

A final question relates to students’ career destinations after their undergraduate degree in business. In the UAE and Malaysia, students alluded to the different salaries recent graduates receive, linked to their ethnicity or institution of their undergraduate degree. What types of enterprises employ them and what positions do they receive? Scholarship on this topic would be most interesting if it considered the unsuccessful students mentioned above. What spaces receive them and how do they position themselves outside of the prestigious English business world?

**CBHE Research**

Although IBCs contribute a necessary service to their host countries by expanding higher education access for peripheral groups, this thesis has shown they do little to further the political or national integration of their students. I am curious to know if this is the case in similar contexts. And, of course, I am now eager to return to Fiji and consider the relationship between higher education and identity there. It would be informative to conduct a larger scale, comparative study of higher education systems in several countries with wealthy minority groups. Such a study would examine the different ways in which governments categorize and situate diverse groups, and what forms of education each is provided with. A more extensive reading of political science literature might allow such a study to make broader conclusions on the relationship between CBHE and ethnicity.

As I look ahead to these sorts of research projects, I would like to test the Comparative Identity Index more broadly, refining it to be more helpful in analysing identity change in multiple contexts. As with any conceptual tool that is developed with minimal collaboration, the CII feels a bit home grown to me. Yet its contribution to modelling the changing nature of multiple identities is deeply needed in a complex world. I am particularly interested using it as an analytic framework for research on Canadian
students’ ethnic identities, comparing how social, informal interactions between ethnically diverse, Canadian students differ between universities and in relation to the broader society.

This study has explored the IBC as a recent phenomenon of cross-border higher education. However, IBCs are only one form of CBHE and globalization continues to quicken the pace of new developments. When new forms of CBHE emerge, it is essential that scholars consider how these influence both individual and collective identities. Of particular interest is the recent development of institutions that are jointly created by multiple institutions from diverse countries. Related scholarship might ask: what are the mutually advanced beliefs about higher education that drive such institutions? How do these shape students’ identities? What types of individuals, with loyalty to what authorities, do these institutions aim to develop?

Finally, there is a lot of room for new theoretical scholarship on the socio-political position of higher education in a globalized world. Chapter Seven draws on the work of Bauman (2001) to suggest that in the 21st Century individuals must acquire new marketable identities and CBHE is an essential institution to facilitate that. At the same time, Chapter Seven argues that IBCs need to contribute to the re-embedding of the economy into its socio-political context. As I reflect on these two arguments, I question how they might interact. What new understandings of embeddedness are necessary if higher education is to become more than just a tool for individual advancement? Are there intrinsic contradictions in a situation where governments are using CBHE to educate their nation's labour force but the education itself is detaching that labour force from any sense of nationhood?

Conclusion
These are just a few of the questions I have found myself asking as I conclude this exploratory study on the identities of students at Western IBCs in the UAE and Malaysia. The more I reflect on this research, the more puzzles arise. In the end, conducting this study has been an incredible privilege. The institutions were generous in letting me talk with their students. The students were surprisingly open and excited to discuss my interview questions. There will always be more questions I would like to ask and more questions I wish I had asked. Understandably, this research has only examined a snapshot in time for its student-participants and the institutions of which they were apart. It is my hope that it has intrigued you, the reader, providing you with a new understanding of how international branch-campuses are shaping the diverse students that attend them in the UAE and Malaysia.
References


Appendix A: Study Approval Letter from University of Toronto’s Research Ethics Board

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 29819

November 22, 2013

Dr. Ruth Hayhoe
OISE/UT: LEADERSHIP, HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION
OISE/UT

Ms. Grace Karram Stephenson
OISE/UT: LEADERSHIP, HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Hayhoe and Ms. Grace Karram Stephenson,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, “Exploring the identities of students at western branch-campuses in Malaysia and United Arab Emirates”

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: November 22, 2013
Expiry Date: November 21, 2014
Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB’s delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe
REB Manager

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
McMurtrie Building, 12 Queen’s Park Crescent West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8 Canada
Tel: +1 416 946-3273 • Fax: +1 416 946-5765 • ethics.review@utoronto.ca • http://www.research.utoronto.ca/for-researchers-administrators/ethics/
Appendix B: Example of Identity Mapping Exercise
(KL #16 – Elizabeth).
Nationality

Family

Profession

Ethnicity

Gender

Religion

Language

Activities

Other People's Perception

Friends
# Appendix C: Profiles of Student Participants

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<th>Name</th>
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This research was conducted using funds from an Ontario Graduate Scholarship and a doctoral scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.