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"I Am Not Your Dictionary, But In Some Ways, I Am:"

Middle Eastern International Students' Experiences with Identity, Diplomacy, and

Internationalization at UCLA

A dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

William Martin Geibel

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

"I Am Not Your Dictionary, But In Some Ways, I Am:"

Middle Eastern International Students' Experiences with Identity, Diplomacy, and

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by

William Martin Geibel

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Robert Teranishi, Chair

In order to meet the demands of globalization, universities across the United States (US) have established internationalization initiatives aimed at improving the global competencies (e.g. international understanding and cultural awareness) of their students. As a central component of these efforts, universities have turned to admitting a growing number of international students in the hopes that their presence on campus will facilitate greater global competencies among all students. In doing so, universities have placed an expectation on international students to be citizen diplomats: individuals tasked with improving global competencies and relations through their interactions with others. However, this diplomatic expectation is rarely communicated directly to international students. Indeed, such an oversight underscores the problematic belief that the benefits of international students are a result of their physical presence on campus, with

little attention paid to the individuality and agency of these students. In fact, the academic literature has little to say about citizen diplomacy through the perspectives of international students. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap by centralizing the voices of Middle Eastern international students at UCLA to understand how they perceive and make meaning of their diplomatic identity and role on campus. In examining this topic, I demonstrate how Middle Eastern international students come to understand their identity in the US, which often revolves around been seen as a representative of the Middle East. Aware of this representative identity, these students both passively and actively engage in forms of citizen diplomacy that they see as improving understanding and awareness of the Middle East. However, their participation in these forms of diplomacy is often hindered by both cultural and political burdens as well as university structures. Ultimately, I argue that to realize the full diplomatic potential of international students, universities must invest in empowering and facilitating all students, both domestic and international, to engage in cross-cultural understanding and interaction. Only then, might the potential of international students to contribute to citizen diplomacy be fulfilled.

The dissertation of William Martin Geibel is approved.

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2020

To my family and friends, across the globe,
who have shown me the power we each hold
to change the world for the better

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A PhD program is a notoriously challenging and often times isolating endeavor, requiring support and guidance from many different people. This dissertation was made possible through the support I have received from a group of wonderful family, friends, and colleagues, and I would be amiss if their contributions were not acknowledged.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Ahmed arrived at UCLA in the fall of 2014 as an excited freshman eager to pursue his

undergraduate degree at a prestigious American university. For Ahmed, an international student

from the Middle East, an American education holds the promise of a better future, both for him

personally and for his community back home. Like most international students, Ahmed's

acceptance to UCLA was not by chance, but was a part of the university's efforts to

internationalize their campus through the inclusion of and exposure to global perspectives,

cultures, and people (Larsen, 2016). In fact, over the last two decades, nearly all major US

universities have initiated similar processes of internationalization, all in an effort to respond to

the growing influence of globalization and remain leaders in the vastly competitive space of

higher education. As part of their pursuit to remain competitive, global universities have

recruited growing numbers of international students, particularly from "developing" regions of

the world, such as the Middle East (IIE, 2017).

For these global universities, the motivation for increasing the enrollment of international

students is not just economical, but also signifies progress in their goals to educate the next

generation of global citizens – equally as prepared to compete in the global marketplace as to

play a role in shaping a more peaceful and understanding world (Altbach & Knight, 2007;

Rhoads, 2005).[1] Supported by research that confirms the cultural and global benefits that

international students bring to domestic campuses, universities have viewed the recruitment of

international students as a necessary step in their internationalization goals (Glass et al., 2015).

In other words, in admitting international students, universities place an implicit expectation on

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[1] I refer to this type of internationalization as humanistic internationalization in order to distinguish it from
internationalization motivated purely by strategic or economic gain. This distinction will be further explained in
Chapter 2.

students like Ahmed; an expectation to be a contributor to their internationalization agendas. For Middle Eastern students, in particular, this expectation holds substantial diplomatic significance, as the volatile relationship between the US and Middle East yearns for new avenues through which to increase understanding and peace.

However, current approaches to internationalization have served to conceptualize international students as passive resources or commodities that provide benefit to the university, rather than individuals with their own agency and identities. For instance, no one at UCLA explained to Ahmed that he carried with him this weighty expectation; no one told him that they hoped his interactions with US students might contribute, in some small way, to the improvement of understanding between the US and Middle East. Instead, the benefit that he, and other international students, would provide to the campus is assumed simply by their presence, with little regard for how their own perceptions, identities, and understandings of themselves and their environment might influence the outcome of their time on campus (Mathews-Aydinli, 2016). Therefore, through an interpretative qualitative approach, this dissertation looks at the ways in which Middle Eastern international students make meaning of and understand their diplomatic identity and role on US campuses. As such, the following research question and sub-questions guide this study:

RQ: As it relates to the humanistic goals of internationalization, how do Middle Eastern international students understand and make meaning of their presence and identity at UCLA?

    a.   What are their feelings towards and experiences with internationalization?

    b.   How do they feel they have contributed to internationalization?

Why Middle Eastern Students

I focus exclusively on Middle Eastern international students for three important reasons. First, to undertake a study that would seek to include the experiences and perspectives of *all* international students, as a single group, would be a fragile affair. This approach would be steeped in the risk of aggregating student data in a manner that does not give due respect to the varying experiences, backgrounds, or identities of these students. Therefore, selecting a single subgroup, Middle Eastern students,[2] helps to ensure that the authenticity and reality of these students' experiences is conveyed with accuracy.

Second, since 9/11 there has been no other region in the world whose relationship with the United States has remained as complex, vulnerable, or consequential than that of the Middle East. Spurred on by war, terrorist attacks, and an endless supply of propaganda, anti-Americanism and Islamophobia have created an environment in which deep divisions exist between the public opinion and perspectives of those in the Middle East and those in the US.[3] Most recently, the Trump Administrations' targeting of Muslim and Middle Eastern people through proposed immigration bans, registries, and inflammatory rhetoric has only fueled these divisions. As such, the potential for improved understanding is particularly consequential.

Third, Middle Eastern international students make up one of the largest, and until 2016 one of the fastest growing, groups of international students in the United States, yet the literature pertaining to their experiences is severely limited. As Iain Wilson (2017) notes, when it comes to research on international students, "empirical evidence suffers from a Eurocentric bias." Therefore, a focus on Middle Eastern international students provides a vibrant case through

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[2] I recognize that even amongst those who identify as Middle Eastern, there exists numerous differences in experiences and perspectives, however, the similarity that they share as self-identified Middle Eastern students provides an important commonality upon which this research is based (Hanassab, 2006).

which to examine the complex process of internationalization through the eyes of those tasked with, at least a portion of, its success.

Additionally, some may wonder why I have chosen not to look specifically at Muslim students from the Middle East or question how I have chosen to distinguish between the terms Middle Eastern and Muslim in the literature. The decision to explore the experiences of Middle Eastern international students broadly, regardless of religion, is based on the observation that Middle Easterners of all religions share common experiences in the United States; and it is in those experiences that this research is interested (Hanassab, 2006).

Acts of violence and discrimination against Middle Eastern individuals exist beyond religious affiliations, with prejudice and acts of Islamophobia often impacting non-Muslim Middle Easterners simply because of the way they look or because of their "Arab descent" (Ali, 2009; Mechbal & Smith, 2013). In fact, there are numerous documented cases of discrimination and violence against individuals of various religious backgrounds simply on account of their looking "Middle Eastern" (Brown, 2001; Delves, 2001), a reality that led the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (2018) to explicitly define Islamophobia as an act of racism, not just religious discrimination. They state: "Islamophobia affects Muslims directly in relation to their expressions of Muslimness but it also affects other minorities for whom a 'perceived Muslimness' can expose them to vulnerability of assault, harassment, discrimination and abuse." Thus, while it can often be difficult in the literature to distinguish between what it means to be Middle Eastern and what it means to be a Middle Eastern Muslim, in this project I do my best to make this distinction, while also attempting to highlight what are shared experiences between these distinct groups of people.

Problem Statement

Despite a significant increase in academic scholarship addressing the 'internationalization' of higher education over the past 20 years, our understanding of internationalization programs and the role they play in contributing to international understanding is still relatively underdeveloped. As Julie Mathews-Aydinli (2016) points out, at a time when student mobility "is at its highest and there is a growing acknowledgement of the potential for such exchanges to contribute to intercultural understanding, and, thus, public diplomacy, research on the topic is limited." Although there has been research demonstrating the benefits that international student programs can have on international as well as domestic students' cultural understanding and global awareness, most of this knowledge has been gained from the perspective of domestic students. Yet just as troubling is the reliance on research that focuses on the *impact* and *outcomes* of international student programs, without acknowledging complexity and variation in how this process takes place, particularly the ways in which individual identity and perception impacts these outcomes (Trice, 2003).

The absence of the international student perspective, in terms of how they make meaning of their identity and role within internationalization, has served to passivize the role of these students and to conceptualize them as "cultural resources" that provide benefit to their domestic universities (Larsen, 2016; Pandit, 2013; Tanaka, 2007). While there has been research seeking to explore the experiences of international students *within* internationalization contexts, such as experiences with acculturation, academic achievement, and friendship and social development, there has been little research focused on role and experiences of international students as *part of* internationalization programs (Vasilopoulos, 2016). Instead, Mathews-Aydinli (2016) points out

that the notion that international students contribute to intercultural understanding is based on two assumptions: "first, that understanding can be improved through the kind of contact encouraged by educational exchanges and second, that the more we know about those who are different from us, the better we will get along with them." However, contrary to this assumption, international students are not passive contributors to internationalization, rather they have their own identities and perspectives, all of which influence their experiences, behaviors, and ultimately, their impact on US campuses. As Marianne Larsen (2016) implores, we must recognize international students as "active subjects and interpreters of their own mobility, rather than viewing them as objects of study."

Significance of Study

The significance of this study can be broken into three distinct areas: contributing to the academic literature on internationalization, providing guidance and knowledge to internationalization and student mobility programs, both within and outside of universities, and advancing scholarship on Middle Eastern students, as a specific population of international students.

First, the academic literature on international students and internationalization has demonstrated the many benefits that arise from the presence of international student programs, in terms of global and cultural understanding, awareness, and competency. However, the great majority of the literature on the impacts of international students conceptualizes these students as "cultural resources," or objects, rather than "active subjects and interpreters of their own mobility" (Larsen, 2016). This has led to a dearth of scholarship seeking to uncover how international students' own identities and perceptions inform the impact they have during their

time abroad. As Hans de Wit (2011) points out, the "presence of many international students on campuses does not equal internationalization; for international students to add to a university's mission of global engagement, they must be integrated with domestic students both inside and outside of the classroom through meaningful collaborations" (de Wit, 2011; Urban & Palmer, 2014). However, what role identity and meaning-making play in the likelihood or quality of these interactions has been left relatively unexamined, particularly from the international student perspective.

Second, the knowledge gained through this project provides value to universities, as well as other institutions hosting student mobility programs, as many collectively seek ways to create a more cohesive and conflict-free world. Through gaining a better understanding of how international students' identity and perceptions play a role in the goals of internationalization, universities will be in a more informed position to design and implement programs in ways that facilitate the greatest international benefit possible. In Chapter 8, I provide recommendations that will assist universities in incorporating the international student perspective as they structure and design programs to meet the growing demands of an ever globalizing world.

Lastly, by focusing specifically on a subset of international students from the Middle East, this project contributes to the limited literature that deals directly with the experiences of Middle Eastern students in America. To date, there is little scholarship that has looked at Middle Eastern students, their identity, perspectives, and experiences, within the context of internationalization of higher education (Seppy, 2018). Moreover, given that Middle Eastern students are a large and growing (up until 2016) group amongst international students,[4]

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[4] Though the recent 2017 laws and restrictions enacted by the Trump administration have negatively impacted, both psychologically and legally, the growth of Middle Eastern people coming to the US, the long-term impact of such legislation on international students from the Middle East is still unclear.

combined with the fragile geopolitical relationship between the US and Middle East, the findings of this project provide unique significance to university and government officials alike. If there is value in student mobility programs providing an avenue for citizen diplomacy, and thus increasing international understanding, then it would be difficult to conceive of two areas of the world who could most benefit from such knowledge.

Background

In order to fully appreciate the context in which this study is positioned, there are two specific background areas that must first be presented. The following section first provides a brief overview of the relationship between the US and the Middle East in order to orient the reader within the setting of current tensions and conflicts between these two regions of the world. Such an understanding will help to make clear why, when undertaking a study relating to the diplomatic impact of student mobility programs, focusing on students from the Middle East makes for a particularly significant and rich case study. It will also help to elucidate that geo-political context and environment in which international students from the Middle East must navigate, endure, and in many ways, overcome while studying in the US. Secondly, an overview of student mobility between the US and Middle East is undertaken to a) provide an overview of the flow of students between the US and Middle East, and b) provide an initial demonstration of how power and inequality exists within international student mobility.

Context: US and Middle East

Since September 11, 2001, there has been no region of the world whose relationship with the US has been more vulnerable, complicated, or consequential, than that of the Middle East.

Often cited as a turning point in US - Middle East relations, September 11th had a dramatic impact on the American public's view of the Middle East and its people. Public opinion polls confirm that Americas' views on the Middle East turned substantially more negative in the days, months and years following the attacks. However, public opinion was not just changed by a single act of terrorism, it was also heavily swayed by the rhetoric and policies of political leaders whose demonization of many Middle Eastern countries effectively turned the region into a US enemy number one.[5]

Less spoken about is the fact that long before the fateful events of 9/11 took place, the US had already amassed a history of participation in military and political conflicts in the Middle East, including most notably, the Gulf War. However, since September 11th, US military presence in the region has swelled, leading to US involvement in wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia. This rise of US military involvement in the region has, understandably, increased American cultural and political influence in the region, but has also negatively swayed American's views of the Middle East. The negative image of the Middle East held by many Americans is perpetuated still by news and political rhetoric, as well as through American popular culture, such as movies and video games, that paint a violent picture of Middle Eastern people (Kellner, 1995). Though there is an extensive body of research that demonstrates how these images and stereotypes of the Middle East have long existed in the US (Bernstein & Studlar, 1997; Said, 1978), their relevancy and frequency in public discourse has continued to grow in a post 9/11 America.

As public opinion towards the Middle East has declined in the past two decades, the presence of Islamophobia and anti-Middle Eastern sentiment has risen drastically. Recent

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[5] See President George W. Bush's 'Axis of Evil' speech

research confirms what many Middle Eastern people in the US already know to be true, many Americans' hold negative views of them, their religion(s), and their countries of origin. Since September 11th, polling has demonstrated that Americans have lower views of Muslims than any other religious group; that 41% of Americans think Islam encourages violence; and that among immigrants, Middle Easterners are regarded has having the worst influence on the US (Pew, 2015; 2017). These attitudes do not just show up in polling, but are reflected in the experiences of Middle Eastern and Muslim individuals in the US, as Muslim kids are four times more likely to be bullied at school than other students, and each year 60% of Muslims report some level of discrimination (Mogahed & Choujoud, 2017). The cultural narrative of the Middle East as an enemy continues to thrive and has contributed to a ballooning in the number of reported hate crimes against Middle Eastern people to an unprecedented 940 in 2017 (Williams, 2017).

Yet, it is not just current cultural or social narratives that alone create the environment in which Middle Easterners as often subject to discrimination and Islamophobia. Since 2016, the Trump Administration has put forth a host of proposed and enacted policies targeting the Middle East and its people. These policies, including a proposed Muslim registry; a proposed ban on Muslim immigration to the US; an enacted travel ban on people from 7 majority Muslim nations in the Middle East and Africa; the official recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; the withdrawal from the Iranian Nuclear Deal and the subsequent enactment of crippling sanctions, have all served as official signals to Middle Eastern people that they are viewed with suspicion at best, and contempt at a worst. This context helps one to not only appreciate the experiences of Middle Eastern students as they navigate their lives in this foreign environment, but also affirms the importance of understanding how these students perceive their purpose and impact on US campuses. Ultimately, in a time when only 33% of Americans have ever interacted with a

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Muslim or Middle Eastern person, the potential role of these international students to influence the attitudes or opinions of others may well be of great significance (Pew, 2016).

Context: Student Mobility Between the US and Middle East

From 2010 - 2015, the number of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) students studying in the US rose nearly 115% (Roy & Lui, 2017). However, in recent years concerns around security, funding cuts, and political decisions of the Trump administration have caused the number of MENA students studying in the USA to decline abruptly (IIE, 2019). Still in 2019, MENA students made up approximately 13% of all international students in the US. The region's top senders, including Saudi Arabia (4th), Iran (13th), Turkey (15th), and Kuwait (16th), combine to send over 75% all 91,646 MENA students studying as international students in the US (IIE, 2019). [6] While the majority of these international students rely on personal and family-backed funding for their education in the US, many are given the opportunity through a variety of scholarship programs funded by their governments. In fact, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah Scholarship program has sent hundreds of thousands of Saudi students to the US to study since it began in 2005 (ICEF, 2016).

In stark contrast to the relatively high enrollment of Middle Eastern students studying in the US, the number of American students going to the Middle East remains staggeringly low. In 2015, only 4,314 US students spent time studying in the region, a figure that equates to less than 2% of all US study abroad students (Open Doors, 2017). Moreover, the vast majority of these students went to the Middle East for short term education programs, such as a summer or semester rather than year, multi-year, or full-enrollment programs (Open Doors, 2017). Thus, the

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[6] Open Doors data locates Turkey in Europe and Israel in the Middle East; so for these calculations I have added Turkish students to the total student count while deducting those from Israel.

flow of Middle Eastern students coming into the US vs. American students going to the Middle East demonstrates a vast disparity that speaks to an underlying power imbalance between these two regions of the world.

FIGURE 1: MENA STUDENTS IN THE US VS. US STUDENTS IN THE MENA

REGIONAL TRENDS
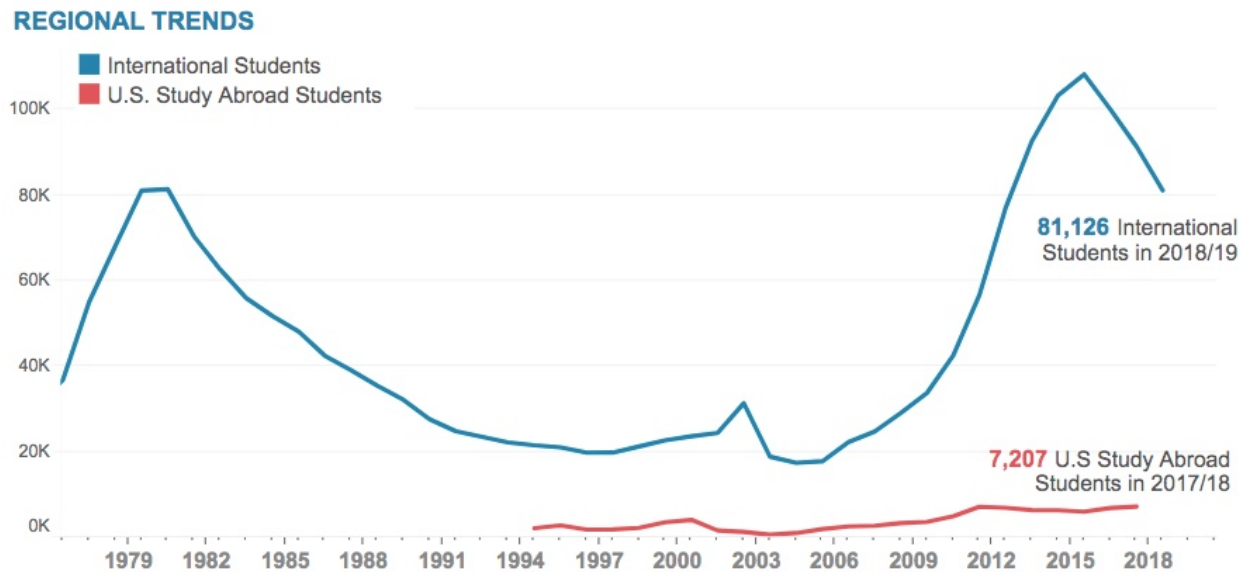
Source: Institute for International Education (IIE). (2019) Open Doors Data Portal.

Though Asia and Europe have made inroads into international student recruitment, in today's world the majority of international students, including those from the Middle East, still choose the US as their first choice for education (Ruiz, 2014). Motivated by a lack of educational opportunities in their home countries and the belief that a US degree provides a chance to improve their career prospects, Middle Eastern students and governments have invested their student resources in the US system (WES, 2017). Because of its global prestige, which is reinforced by global university rankings, American higher education has directly and indirectly influenced the flow of students, both in terms of directionality and quantity. This power imbalance, which manifests in the disparity between international students studying in the Middle East versus the US, has allowed the US to enjoy the benefits that stem from being the

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largest recipient of international students in the world (Adnett, 2010; Bashir, 2007; Chellaraj, Maskus, & Mattoo, 2008). I speak more about the role of power in the theoretical framework section, but for now let it suffice to conclude that the numbers speak for themselves, and in terms of student mobility, the relationship between the US and Middle East is far from reciprocal.

Overview of Chapters

Equipped with this knowledge, the remainder of this dissertation takes the following form. In chapter 2, a review of the literature is undertaken to highlight the major areas that contribute to the topic at hand. In chapter 3, I explain the theoretical framework from which I drew upon to frame and analyze the data collected. In chapter 4, I provide an explanation of the methods and methodology that I used to answer the research question(s) presented. In chapters 5-7, I highlight the central findings that emerged through a detailed analysis of the collected data. In chapter 8, based upon the experiences of the participants, I provide a series of recommendations for universities on how to improve their internationalization programs and initiatives. Lastly, in chapter 9, I provide concluding remarks on the study and suggest areas for future research that can build off of the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I begin with an overview of the literature relating to the purpose and motivation behind internationalization programs, as well as what is known about the influences of universities on international relations. From there, I move into the literature pertaining directly to the experiences of international students, focusing specifically on their interactions with other students, and ultimately, their identity and its formation. Finally, I conclude with a section on the experiences and challenges of Middle Eastern students in America.

Motivations for Internationalization and International Student Programs

As internationalization has proliferated among American universities, there have developed varying rationales and motivations for the pursuit of international student programs. While much research has supported the belief that international student and exchange programs are a "remedy for widespread prejudices and global ignorance, and operate in ways to prepare students to become active global citizens (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011: Larsen, 2014; Larsen, 2016; Lewin, 2009; Plater et al., 2009), an equal amount of scholarship has argued that it is self-interest and "economic motivations associated with positioning students to be successful in the new knowledge economy" that are the key drivers (Heron, 2007; Jorgenson, 2015). Michael Matthews (1989) has described this tension in terms of programs that are driven by ideology versus those that are driven by market forces. Similarly, Jane Knight (2004) divides the rationales for internationalization into four categories: Social/cultural, political, economic, and academic. Based off Matthews' and Knights' observed taxonomies, both of which help to frame the debate around internationalization, I divide the motivations for internationalization into two

overarching categories: Strategic (Competition-based) vs. Humanistic (Collaboration-based) in order to elucidate the varying rationales and benefits of these particular programs.

Strategic (Competition-based) Motivations

The strategic approach to internationalization, and student mobility in particular, refers to those motivations and desired outcomes that seek to provide advantage to a person, community or state in relation to others, and is rooted within the neoliberal view of globalization and development (Larsen, 2016). Within strategic approaches to international programs, the underlying value is that of competition and the pursuit of relative gains and preeminence, whether it be in the terms of economic, political, and/or cultural power. Speaking to the US context, Walter Parker (2008, 2011) provides an apt description of the strategic approach, "international education is intended to address the key problem posed by globalization: the defense of the nation's competitive edge in the new worldwide economy" and for individuals it provides "the best opportunity for success in the emerging workforce." International student programs, from this perspective, are focused on developing tools that will enhance the chances for national and individual success in global politics, business, and labor markets (Hill, 2015). Through this lens, international programs are to help the privileged maintain their elite positions in the global economy at the expense of others (Hill, 2015).

Supporting this motivation, ample research has demonstrated the economic benefit that international students bring to the US and their host universities in terms of tuition, living expenses, and tourism (Farrugia, Chow, & Bhandari, 2012). For countries receiving international students, the economic benefits are often substantial. For example, during just the 2016 – 2017 academic school year, a recent NAFSA report demonstrates that international students contributed $36.9 billion and more than 450,00 jobs to the U.S. economy (NAFSA, 2018). For

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universities, international students represent a lucrative avenue for increased revenue, as they typically pay "significantly higher out of state tuition levels" and at times are required to pay an additional "international student fee" (Varn, 2017). Moreover, international students are typically ineligible for financial aid and therefore pay the full cost of tuition out of pocket or through funding from their home country. The income gained from international student tuition – which represents 10 percent of all net tuition revenue – becomes even more important as universities continue to see decreases in public funding and waning high school graduation rates (Douglas-Gabriel, 2016). Thus, this economic motivation has become a driving force behind the strategic approach to international student programs and their expansion.

For domestic students, research has shown that international students provide them with skills and perspectives that make them more competitive in a globalizing economy (Cheney, 2001). Research confirms that "with increased cultural sensitivities and skills needed to work effectively with people from different backgrounds," which is gained through interaction with international students, "domestic students could well have "a competitive advantage" in the marketplace in an increasingly interconnected, globalized world" (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013; Montgomery, 2009).

Ultimately, the strategic approach to student mobility programs is much more about upward movement and power inequality than it is about global citizenship or learning. As numerous scholars have critiqued, international education is inherently connected to the realities of cultural and political hegemony on a macro level, and can easily be used to reify the dominance of western, English speaking countries over all others (Breit et al., 2013; Le Ha & Barnawi, 2015; Mok, 2007; Wang, 2006). Indeed, scholars have found evidence that student mobility increases the dominance of English as a global hegemonic language and further

contributes to the commodification of students in higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; De Wit, 2008; Guruz, 2008; Larsen 2016). Additionally, international mobility has also been critiqued for reifying individual and class inequalities due to the high financial burden that often accompanies an international education experience. As a result, international students are disproportionately from privileged social, political, and economic backgrounds. Thus, international student mobility tends to reinforce inequality through advantaging dominant cultures as the most privileged groups and individuals within each society (Bilecen, 2017).

Humanistic (Collaboration-based)

Though there are numerous concepts that help to elucidate that humanistic approach to internationalization, such as international mindedness, global citizenship, and cultural competence, ultimately, they are all motivated by the idea of "learning to live together" through the development of global consciousness and understanding (Haigh, 2014). From the humanistic perspective, the goal of "global learning" aptly illustrates the approach and purpose of international student programs (Hill, 2015). Based upon these principles, the purpose of international student programs is to help reduce prejudice and ignorance thereby leading to the development of global citizens who are able to actively contribute to a better world (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Larsen, 2014; Lewin, 2009; Plater et al., 2009). Appreciating this perspective, scholars have suggested that universities have begun to view the presence of international students as "opportunities for domestic students to engage with those coming from different cultures, which, in turn, allows them to shed stereotypes, explore new perspectives, and gain intercultural skills" (Pandit, 2013).

The humanistic approach may be best appreciated through the writings of Emmanuel Levinas, whose work provides what some have considered to be the basic framework for international education and mobility (Bruce, 2013; Larsen, 2016). For Levinas (1989), ethics derive from the experience of encountering the "Other," and that through civility, hospitality, kindness, and politeness, ethical relationships can be formed between individuals and communities around the world. Through such interactions, which international student programs provide, greater understanding and awareness of the world can be developed.

More recently, Boyd Roberts (2013) has sought to further define the humanistic approach to international education by suggesting that it is about a commitment to "education for a better world." A statement such as this articulates the underlying ethos associated with a humanistic approach, which is the notion that through engagement, interaction, and exposure, international student programs can play a role in creating understanding and cooperation around the globe in the pursuit of a more peaceful world. As the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Global Learning initiative reinforces, the "goal should be to assist campuses in educating students to become responsible citizens of the nation and the world" and to "deepen student knowledge of the world, challenge unexamined assumptions… and test [students] commitments and ideals for a world lived in common" (DiYanni, 2012).

Yet despite the competing perspectives on internationalization, both approach international students as a "resource" for either diversifying student populations, aiding the development of US students, increasing revenue, or in general, bringing benefit to the host universities' reputation, campus, and students (Glass et al., 2015; Jayakumar, 2008). Though recent research suggests that international students are open to being engaged as "cultural resources" (Urban & Palmer, 2014), the extent to which these students are conceptualized as

passive contributors to universities is problematic and strips away agency from international students (Larsen, 2016). I return to this topic in subsequent sections, but for now I highlight this humanistic vs. strategic dichotomy to demonstrate how this research is both embedded within the humanistic approach while still being critical of its shortcomings.

Student Mobility and International Diplomacy

The notion that education plays a role in international diplomacy is one that dates back to the very first instances of individuals traveling to foreign places to observe from and learn about the educational systems of other countries (Brickman, 1960). Though activities such as the German DAAD program developed shortly after the turn of the 20th century, US recognition of the power of education in diplomacy officially began with the creation of the Fulbright program in 1946, whose mission it was to fund the "promotion of international goodwill through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science" (Fulbright, 2018). Following World War II, a "whole swathe of social scientific and behaviorist research, mainly in the fields of communications and psychology, laid the basis for understanding the political implications of public diplomacy and [educational] exchanges" (Scott-Smith, 2008). Although there have been studies looking to draw more direct connections between international education and global peace (Haugen, 2013), efforts to confirm general assumptions of the specific effectiveness of educational exchanges on international relations have remained somewhat elusive (Scott-Smith, 2008). Indeed, the question of how to show a link between student mobility and peace—or if one even exists—is a distinct and intellectually challenging one. Nonetheless, a small yet growing body of literature points to the numerous ways in which student mobility is influencing international relations and diplomacy.

As mentioned previously, the Fulbright program would come to be seen as the formal beginning of what is considered the third tier of US diplomacy, otherwise known as public diplomacy. Public diplomacy is most often defined as the "process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented" (Melissen, 2005). Simply stated, public diplomacy is the *public* side of diplomacy that is carried out not by foreign policy messengers, but by a multitude of actors, including individuals, organizations, businesses and media (Fitzpatrick, 2007). Observing the influence of such types of diplomacy, in 1990 Joseph Nye coined the term "soft power" in order to explain the significance of education, as well as culture, arts, and media, as foreign policy tools (Nye, 2004). While public diplomacy has historically been linked to more nefarious, government-sponsored activities, such as media propaganda (Scott-Smith, 2008), more recent scholarship has defined a "New Public Diplomacy," distinguished by its pursuit of mutually-beneficial, two-way relationships between foreign publics that goes beyond hegemonic or imperialist pursuits (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Izadi, 2016; Lindsay, 1989; Zaharna & Uysal, 2015). It is within this understanding of public diplomacy, as a process of informational interactions that leads to better understanding between people, that the humanistic approach to internationalization resides.

Several studies have found support for the notion that education has influences on diplomacy and understanding on an international level (Haugen, 2013; Klineberg, 1976; Lima, 2008; Scott-Smith, 2008). According to Howard E. Wilson (2017), whose work is specifically focused on government-sponsored exchange programs but nonetheless can be applied to all forms of student exchange, the existing literature points to four major effects of student mobility which have been shown to contribute to peace: signaling, attitude change, intercultural

competence, and network formation. While signaling refers to the symbolism of goodwill involved in the movement of students it can communicate the expectation or intent of good relations and cooperation between countries, attitude changes, intercultural competence, and network formation, all focus on individuals and the ways in which their experiences influence international relations.

First, attitude change refers to the potential for international/exchange students to return to their home countries and spread their opinions of the host country, thereby influencing others' opinions or perspectives of that particular country. This impact has been noticed and document by several scholars (Larsen, 2016; Campbell, 2016; Lybeck, 2002). Second, cultural competence signifies the comfortability and understanding that individuals acquire during their time abroad, which can help to "lubricate relationship between countries [and individuals] into the distant future and facilitate communication across boarders" (Campbell, 2016; Wilson, 2017). Though many studies have furthered this idea, Giles Scott-Smith (2008) observes that student mobility can make a useful (often unnoticeable) contribution "at the level of foreign policy implementation, [where] better understanding creates an enabling environment as cross-cultural friction is reduced" (Lima 2007; Scott-Smith, 2008). Reducing such friction is often touted as a main objective of government-sponsored programs such as the Fulbright Program in the US or the German Academic Exchange Service (i.e. DAAD). Lastly, network formation can occur when individuals live abroad and develop relationships and communications with individuals of that country. Such relationships can then sustain into the future and enable the exchange of information, collaboration, or assistance thereby "keeping lines of information communication between two countries open" (Wilson, 2017).

However, what is left out in Howard E. Wilson's (2017) typology, is the influence that international and exchange students have on the attitudes and competencies of their host communities. Other scholars have taken up this task and found the impact of international students to be of particular significance upon those in their host communities and universities. In fact, scholarly work has demonstrated that the diplomatic and cultural impact of international students is not just in their development, but in the influence they have amongst domestic students and communities (Andrade, 2009; Grayson, 2008; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013). Thus, the following section looks to the benefits and "cultural resources" that international students bring to host campuses.

The Benefits and Engagement of International Students as "Cultural Resources"

As has been demonstrated in the previous section, university internationalization efforts have become multifaceted endeavors, and yet, international student programs have and continue to play a central role in the mission of these programs. While the recruitment of international students is one of the two major strategies utilized by universities to internationalize their campuses, research points to the very real benefits, in terms of intercultural competencies, that these students are providing for the US and their campus peers (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Gurin et al., 2002). Consistently, research has confirmed that students participating in study abroad and international education programs increase their cultural awareness and proficiency, global consciousness, and even intellectual inquisitiveness (Clarke et al., 2009; Douglas & Jones-Rikkers, 2001; Kitsantas, 2004). This is true for both international students and for the domestic students with whom they interact. For those domestic students, international students can be a source of opportunities for cross-cultural communication and the enhancement of international and intercultural skills that they could not get elsewhere (Geelhoed, Abe, & Talbot,

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2003). For example, it has been found that by participating in the classroom, international students enrich domestic students' educational experience by advancing international perspectives that would otherwise not be present (Gareis, 2012). Such an enlargement of "intellectual horizons" affects the cultural development of the university and those who exist within it (Klineberg, 1976). Indeed, universities benefit greatly from the presence of international students and the cultural contributions they bring with them (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Urban and Palmer, 2014).

Yet, despite the benefits of international students, there has been limited research looking at the intentional contributions of international students to internationalization goals (Urban and Palmer, 2014). Ewa Urban and Louann Palmer (2014) surveyed 249 undergraduate and graduate international students and found a statistically significant difference between how much they are engaged as cultural resources (i.e. are asked by US students about their culture, have international perspectives integrated into classes, are asked to offer cultural perspectives, etc.) versus how much they would like to be engaged by their universities. They concluded that international students are being under engaged by their universities despite their desire to play a larger role in enhancing cultural understanding on campus. This conclusion supports similar findings by Marijke Breuning (2007), who found that international students were quite willing to play a role in educating their American peers and that 80% of international students in their survey considered themselves "unofficial ambassadors" of their country and culture.

While these prior studies provide an understanding of the willingness of international students to play a role in internationalization of their campuses as well as demonstrating the benefits of these students, most of this knowledge has been gained through large sample survey data, particularly from Midwestern universities. In fact, there has been little, if any, research that

has sought to utilize in-depth qualitative research to elucidate how international students make meaning of or perceive their roles and identities within their US universities. In the absence of literature in this regard, I move to focus on what has been considered the single most important factor in realizing the cultural benefits of international students: domestic-international student interaction.

International Student Interactions

As many scholars have noted, the major factor in the realization of the cultural and diplomatic benefits of international students is the quality of interactions between them and their domestic counterparts (Breuning, 2007). As de Wit (2011) points out, the "presence of many international students on campuses does not equal internationalization; for international students to add to a university's mission of global engagement, they must be integrated with domestic students both inside and outside of the classroom through meaningful collaborations" (de Wit, 2011; Urban & Palmer, 2014). It is dialogue, discussion, and interaction with peers that form the core of students' understanding of the US, the world, and ultimately, their global perspective (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Engberg, 2014; Glass et al., 2015; Merill, Braskamp, & Braskamp, 2012).

Yet, research continues to demonstrate that international students choose to spend most of their time with other international students and that their relations with domestic students or locals in the community tend to be superficial and brief (Campbell, 2016; Chisholm, 2003; Ogden, 2008). Research also points to the fact that even though international students may desire interaction with host students, participation in study abroad does not necessarily guarantee international-domestic student interaction or even the opportunity for relationships to be built between these two groups (Allen & Herron, 2003; Campbell, 2016; Grey, 2002; Hernandez,

2010; Magnan & Back, 2007; Mendelson, 2004). The lack of engagement between international and domestic students not only disappoints international students, who often have expectations of larger interactions, but also hinders their ability to create relationships and the potential for their presence to serve the humanistic goals of internationalization (Allen & Herron, 2003; Hernandez, 2010; Magnan & Black, 2007; Tanaka, 2007).

While there are various factors that influence international student interactions, the role of the university as a space for learning and relationship building is at the forefront. The very notion of international education depends upon fixed places, such as universities, that create the conditions necessary for mobility and interaction of students to take place (Urry, 2007). When looking at international branch campuses, Johanna Waters and Maggi Leung (2013) found that students have more negative experiences in terms of developing global perspectives and relationships when the university lacks opportunities that facilitate relationships between international students and their domestic classmates. They argue that the university is a space that nurtures cultural and social capital, however, such development is contingent upon social interactions and the ability for students to build relationships with their peers. Their findings provide evidence as to the importance of "place and material spaces, such as the university campus… in shaping students' transnational education experiences (Larsen, 2016; Waters & Leung, 2013). The importance of the university as a space for social interaction is reinforced by spatial scholars who promote the idea that "space matters" in social phenomena and in the production of knowledge and identity (Larsen & Beech, 2014). Overall, research on how and why students have opportunities for interaction with local participants has defined two broad categories of importance: 1) program/university variables, and 2) personal factors (Campbell, 2016).

Programmatic variables impacting interaction

The importance of exchange programs in creating spaces and opportunities for students to come into contact is crucial in understanding student interaction, because without well designed and executed programs, students may be unintentionally grouped in ways that discourage international-host interaction (Churchill & Deon, 2006). In the current literature, there are three primary programmatic factors that have been well investigated in terms of their facilitating of student interaction: housing, classes, and extracurricular activities.

Housing situations have been shown to have an impact upon student interaction and engagement with local communities and peers since most options of housing for international students involve, at the very least, proximity to and contact with locals (Campbell, 2016). While studies on housing have highlighted the positive impacts of mixed dormitory-style housing on interaction compared to situations in which international students are housed together (Gareis, 2000; Kudo & Simkin, 2003), there has also been much criticism that points to the limited success of integrated housing in forging ties between international and local students (Bochner, Hutnik & Furnam, 1985; Campbell, 2011; Tanaka, 2007). Though it is clear that housing is an important feature in facilitating student interaction, the belief that putting students together will lead automatically to interaction appears to be overly simplistic.

Classes, within university settings, are another important factor that influence and provide opportunity for student interaction. Studies on these programs have demonstrated that these classrooms can provide valuable opportunities for students to engage based upon the intentionality of course and curriculum design, such as group projects or buddy systems (Chang, 2008; Morofushi, 2008). However, research has also found that even within these settings international students can still feel isolated and separated from their peers (Morofushi, 2008).

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Once again, the research suggests that the type of class students participate within is important, but doesn't necessarily guarantee interaction or friendship development with host students (Campbell, 2016; Zappa, 2007).

Lastly, extra-curricular activities have been found to be effective ways in which domestic and international students are able to form connections and pursue interaction (Burns, 1996; Kim & Yang, 2010). Social and cultural clubs, which are led by international students, are often avenues through which international students can inform and educate their American peers about their cultures and countries (Breuning, 2007). Thus, the ability of universities to support these types of clubs is another important aspect that impacts the interaction of students.

As these three factors demonstrate, there are no clear answers in terms of what it takes to improve student interactions. While there is still a "growing need to better understand the dynamics of what is happening within specific program design features and how best to intervene to enhance student learning outcomes (Ogden & Streitwieser, 2016; Vanda Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012), other scholars have turned their research gaze upon students, and their personal characteristics, to help understand student interactions on campus.

Personal factors impacting interaction

Beyond the programmatic and environmental factors influencing student interactions, some scholars have argued that it is ultimately, "an individual's personal and social circumstances that structure the opportunities for, and constraints on, how many and what types of people they meet" (Campbell, 2016; Feld et al., 2007; Fischer, 1982). Indeed, studies have found that personal factors, such as personal disposition, traits, and skills, shape the ways in which international individuals interact as well as the quality and quantity of such interactions with domestic hosts (Antonucci, Langfahl & Akiyama, 2004; Takai, 1990). In terms of

motivation for interaction, the literature suggests that it is the desire to increase one's linguistic competency plays the largest role in the realization of host-international interaction (Campbell, 2016). Additionally, student characteristics such as high language skills, extroverted personalities, prior travel experiences, and opened-minded attitudes towards forming relationships with host nationals all play a positive role in the likelihood of intercultural contact and friendship development (Pavel, 2006; Sias et al., 2008). Contrastingly, fear of language incompetency or making mistakes, lack of openness to other cultures, and low confidence have also been found to be some of the largest inhibitors of interaction between domestic and international students (Krywulak, 1995; Lee & Boster, 1991).

Yet despite this knowledge, the literature has afforded little energy to researching the areas of linkage between programmatic or environmental factors and personal factors. Specifically, the ways in which internationalization programs and structures influence the identity and perspectives of international students, and thus their behaviors within the context of internationalization goals. In the absence of specific literature on this topic, the following section provides an overview of what *is* known about international student identity and formation.

International student identity

Many psychology and sociology scholars have emphasized the importance of social context and environment in identity formation (Erikson, 1959; Gergen, 1991; McEwen, 2003; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). However, as Eunyoung Kim (2012) and other scholars have observed that "despite the plethora of college student identity development research, very little attention has been paid to the identity formation of international students" (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Prazeres, 2013). To fill this gap, Kim (2012) developed the International Student Identity (ISI) model to provide a six-phase framework to understand international

student identity formation. The six phases include: pre-exposure, exposure, enclosure, emergence, integration, and internationalization. When international students first arrive in the US, Kim (2012) posits that students face identity challenges and gaps that stem from being in a foreign environment where people view them differently than they might see themselves (Jung & Hecht, 2004). This can result in feelings of fragmented identity that can lead to difficulty in students' constructing a sense of self identity or belonging (Hsieh, 2006; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Vertovec, 1999). However, Kim (2012) suggests that as students move onto phases 5 and 6, they are able to successfully overcome these challenges and reconstruct their identities by going "through a process of reshaping and redefining their unique selves while embodying and integrating appealing aspects learned from others."

This notion of integrating new aspects into an identity, is captured in the literature by the concept of "in between identity." Students create new identities based upon their new environments, which for international students means learning from their university campus and community (Glass et al., 2015). Relatedly, Claire Kramsch (1993) puts forth the idea of "third place identities," in which he suggests that new environments can have a positive influence on student identity formation as international students are no longer restricted by the social or cultural barriers in their home countries and are more "free to reconstruct a new identity that is more aligned with their inner values and their new experiences" (Le et al., 2016). Kramsch and others argue that being in this area of "in-betweeness" actually "provides international students the ability to overcome the social pressure to conform to either home or host culture and to establish new hybrid forms of identity" (Bhabha, 1994; Le et al., 2016). With identity becoming a very salient concept in international students' lives, it is little wonder that they find commonality in navigating their new hybrid identities. This often leads international students to

form "in group identities" that lead them to engage and relate more with one another, rather than domestic students (Glass et al., 2015).

In sum, the literature suggests that international student experiences do influence their identities, such as increasing national identity (Dolby, 2004) or developing a new international student identity (Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003), however, the limited research still does not provide much understanding for how identity formation both impacts and is impacted by students' experiences and behaviors on campus. Thus, what role identity and meaning making plays in influencing the behaviors of international students remains an outstanding question that has not yet been developed in the literature.

Middle Eastern Students: Discrimination and Prejudice in the US

As Michael Omni and Howard Winant (2014) have rightly pointed out, racial formation is not a neutral process but is influenced by social and political forces. For any individual, their identity and experiences cannot be fully understood nor appreciated without first exploring the social and political context in which they exist. Kimberly Crenshaw (1989) reminds us that minority communities are in a constant process of racialization, racial reconstruction and redefinition, and this is particularly true for those from the Middle East and whose identity in America has long been marred by racist and bigoted media, cultural, and political narratives. As such, it is necessary to highlight the literature that explores how cultural and social forces inform the experiences, and identities, of Middle Eastern students in America.

Though it is easy to assume that all Middle Eastern students must grapple with a "spoiled identity," Amir Marvasti (2005) cautiously suggests that not all Middle Eastern individuals experience their identity in the same ways. In practical terms, it is simply not the case that Middle Eastern individuals experience discrimination or negative repercussions of their identity

in all situations and at all times. However, there is also widespread consensus that being Middle

Eastern in America is an identity fraught with misunderstanding and mistrust, which no doubt

impacts the lives of those to which it has been assigned (Marvasti, 2005; Modir & Kia-Keating,

2009). Indeed, there is a robust body of literature that demonstrates how negative stereotypes and

portrayals of the Middle East throughout the 20th century have worked to reify harmful and

dangerous images about what it means to be from the Middle East. Thanks to a barrage of media,

including video games, movies, and news, words such as terrorist, religious fanatic, violent, or

backwards are often commonly associated with people from the region (Kellner, 1995; Marvasti,

2006; Said, 1978; Shaheen, 2009). In fact, positive associations with the Middle East are nearly

impossible to find in the vast marketplace of American media (Shaheen, 2009).

Yet despite the widespread and negative images of the Middle East across American

society, at the same time Middle Eastern people are often made to be invisible in many public

spaces, including schools (Modir & Kia-Keating, 2018). For example, while "Middle Eastern"

people have been the targets of various forms of government-sponsored racial profiling, on the

US Census Middle Easterners are still categorized as White or Caucasian (Tehranian, 2009).

Selective erasure of identity, such as this, "limits the ability of Middle Eastern Americans to

identify as a distinct racial group and, further, to receive protected rights as a minority group

within the United States" (Modir & Kia-Keating, 2018; Tehranian, 2009).

Middle Eastern students in America must contend with disparaging narratives and

stereotypes on a daily basis as they navigate a society which looks unfavorably upon their culture

(Ali, 2009). Yet despite the importance of understanding these students' lives, there continues to

be an almost complete void of research on this group (Modir & Kia-Keating, 2018). However,

pulling from research on Middle Eastern individuals more broadly, we know that they tend to

report higher rates of discrimination as well as higher levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress as a result of cultural stigma and discrimination (Amer & Hovey, 2012; Moradi & Hanan, 2004). For Middle Eastern Americans, the extent to which their identity becomes so closely tied to the Middle East (i.e. its politics, social values, culture) has serious implications for their mental health and well-being. As Marvasti (2005) has argued, "the political turmoil in the Middle East directly affects their [Middle Easterners'] lives in the United States, so much so that there is almost a direct correspondence between the volatility of the region and the instability of Middle Eastern identities in the United States." To cope with pervasive discrimination and an unstable identity, Middle Eastern Americans are often pushed to present themselves in strategic ways, many of which result in the suppression of their own Middle Eastern identity in order to overcome stereotypes and prejudice. A process that John Tehranian (2009) refers to as a form of "whitewashing" of the Middle Eastern identity.

In one of the only explorations of Middle Eastern student experiences and responses to discrimination, Sheila Modir & Maryam Kia-Keating (2018) concluded that students are not immune from the social and cultural stereotypes that surround a Middle Eastern identity. The authors found discrimination against this group of students to be pervasive across all students from the Middle East. They attribute much of the discrimination faced by their participants as a result of constant negative messaging that Americans consume about the Middle East. They summarized the experiences of their Middle Eastern student participants in this way:

> The participants expressed that the one-sided, negative portrayals of the Middle East in the US mass media influenced both the public and their peers' perceptions of the region and the MEA population. Many participants were forced to face regular, pointed questions from peers asking them if they supported terrorism; implicit in these questions was a sense of mistrust and deep division focusing on improbably extreme differences instead of recognizing commonalities and connection. (p. 574)

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While underscoring the importance of providing cultural-specific support for Middle Eastern

students, Modir and Kia-Keating (2018) provide a stark assessment of the consequences that

such prevalent forms of discrimination have on the lives of Middle Eastern students:

> At the individual level, Middle Eastern American students may not initially realize or
> identify certain experiences as discriminatory, such as their process of getting used to the
> discrimination or simply categorizing it as cultural ignorance; however, they may carry
> the effect of the experience with them into their social circles and academics later on. (p.
> 576)

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As a study that seeks to draw connections between individuals and international diplomacy, my framework is one that seeks to bridge the global and local by demonstrating the relationship between the micro (individuals), meso (university), and macro (international relations) levels of analysis in this particular context. To do so, my approach to this topic is guided by four major theoretical areas: first, I use citizen diplomacy to illustrate the role that individuals play in international relations; second, I employ a Social Identity Approach (SIA) to demonstrate the relevance and role of individual identity within internationalization outcomes; third, I use critical theory to highlight how power manifests in student mobility; and fourth, I integrate the notion of Otherness to illuminate the collective experiences of Middle Eastern people and students.

Area 1: Citizen Diplomacy: The individual in international relations

The idea that individuals contribute to improving international relations and understanding is one that is captured within the concept and theory of citizen diplomacy. Citizen diplomacy, which is understood as an activity of international relations, and soft power specifically, is diplomacy carried out by citizens through interaction and engagement with foreign publics (Attias, 2012). In a world where individuals are more closely connected than ever, the potential for citizens to play an active role in shaping the opinions and perspectives of their foreign counterparts is amplified. Thus, for many governmental and nongovernmental institutions, citizens have become the target of diplomacy efforts, particularly within universities (Young, 2014). In this way, citizen diplomacy is rooted in the belief that through building blocks

of individual relationships larger global understandings can be constructed (Attias, 2012; Melissen, 2005).

It is important to mention that traditional approaches of public and citizen diplomacy have been closely related to power and efforts of states to improve their own prospects in the world (Nye, 1990). This traditional approach entangled with notions of American exceptionalism and orientalism such that citizen diplomacy is seen as a means of propaganda to increase a country's influence in the world (Izadi, 2016). However, I use citizen diplomacy here through the lens of Kathy Fitzpatrick's (2007) New Public Diplomacy, which conceptualizes citizen interactions as mutually beneficial opportunities for relationship building, communication, and symmetry (Izadi, 2016).

Yet, within the conceptualization of citizen diplomacy, the individuality of individuals is not often interrogated for its impact on the outcomes of interaction. Contact theory provides one approach to understanding what factors may influence individual interactions, however, it still fails to address the underlying identities, or meaning making, of students located within a particular social environment (Allport, 1954). Given the reliance of citizen diplomacy on behavior, I use a social identity approach to demonstrate how identity is both socially constructed and central to the behavior and actions of individuals, which ultimately contributes to the outcomes of citizen diplomacy.

Area 2: Social Identity Approach: Individual identity and behavior

To understand how I see identity playing a role in internationalization and citizen diplomacy, I employ a social identity approach (SIA) (Mavor, Platow & Bizumic, 2017), which combines components of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) with self-categorization theory (Oaks, 1987). By employing SIA I do not assert that the experiences of international

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students can be explained within a specific psychological model, but rather I suggest that the tenants of SIA are useful in explaining and understanding the outcomes of internationalization programs through a focus on individual students identity, and its formation. Specifically, the five central tenants put forth by Kenneth Mavor, Michael Platow & Boris Izumic (2017), provide a framework around which my study, research questions, and methodology are constructed.

The first tenant is that people pursue meaning-making in their lives as they seek to make sense of their environment and their place within that environment. As such, it follows that international students seek to make meaning of their new environments (i.e. US campuses) and their place within it, which is an assumption upon which this research is based.

Second, that the concept of self (i.e. self-identity) is one that can be understood as both the "outcome of personal history, memory and expectations, a person's current start, as well as a person's active online assessment of the context (i.e. meaning-making)." In other words, many factors influence a person's understanding of themselves, and that understanding subsequently "guides attention, creates motivation, filters information and serves as a basis for interpreting information." The self is therefore seen as a "reflexive system in which it is contrasted through similarity and difference judgements, while these judgments are themselves influenced by individuals' currently salient self-concepts." Thus, how international students make meaning of their experiences at US campuses is informed by their past and current experiences and their self-identity, which ultimately influences how they interpret their position within their current environment.

Third, that humans' concept of self is both dynamic and context-dependent. Humans' perceptions of themselves are not "fixed… and this dynamic nature of the self is viewed as a normal psychological process that allows flexibility in behaviors to act appropriately in a

dynamic world." As such, the university, through its programming and messaging, is fundamental in the formation of student outcomes, including how students perceive themselves and their identity (Astin, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The fourth and fifth tenants together suggest that, in any given situation, individuals' perception of themselves can be represented at either a personal or collective level; as in what makes them different from others (personal) as well as what makes them similar (collective). However, these levels are not in competition with one another and there is no one "true self," but rather they work together to create representations of their self as they move from situation to situation in their lives.

Together, these tenants of SIA guide my research as they highlight the ways in which international students' identities are socially constructed and influenced by their university environment, as well as how their identity ultimately informs their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with others at the university. From the social identity perspective, the concept of identity I employ is not restricted to features such as being a Muslim or having brown hair, but rather as a concept that captures an individual's perception of themselves within a particular social environment. Thus, the SIA provides a critical link that is often missing in the literature on internationalization and citizen diplomacy by highlighting the foundational influence that students' own meaning-making and thus their identities have on the interpersonal outcomes of international student programs.

Area 3: A Critical Approach: Power and inequality in student mobility

Despite the humanistic rhetoric of universities and internationalization programs, I make no assumption that student mobility programs are steeped in equality and equalitarianism. Rather, I acknowledge that these programs overwhelmingly serve the benefit of an elite class of

students as well as countries in positions of power and influence in the world. Critical theories, such as World Systems Theory, neo-Marxism, and post-structuralism, all suggest that power and hegemony drive activities of globalization, such as student mobility. The vast inequality in the flow of students between the Middle East and United States reflects the system of power put forth by World Systems Theory, in which the US represents a core country and the Middle East a peripheral; with resources (students) flowing in essentially one direction (Barnett et. al, 2015). Using their position of influence in the world, countries like the US reap the benefits of international student tuition, knowledge, and expertise, while peripheral countries, such as those in the Middle East, benefit only insofar as their students return with resources of value.

The lack of reciprocity between the US and Middle East in terms of student mobility demonstrates the magnitude of the pull the US higher education system has on Middle Eastern students. Yet, the US reputation is inherently intertwined with the concepts of American exceptionalism, hegemony, and imperialism. The dominance of the US in terms of educational rankings, is a direct consequence as well as a driver of US dominance in the world. As such, it not only benefits from its place in the geography of international student mobility, but its position reinforces its power and influence globally,

Moreover, student mobility not only benefits core countries, but elite groups of individuals around the world who have the resources to take advantage of the cultural and economic capital that results from attendance of a prestigious university (Schofer and Meyer, 2005). Recognizing the unequal access to prestigious universities, Robin Shields (2013) contends that "as higher education enrollment expands globally, elites turn to "world class" universities… to protect and perpetuate their status." Ultimately, international student mobility serves the

interests of "transnational and national elites that can gain access to the globally most prestigious universities" (Brown and Lauder, 2006).

In a world of globalization, where economic incentive and competition rules, the power imbalance between the US and Middle East dictates the experiences of international student mobility in a way that disproportionately centralizes the benefits to the US and global elites. As Larsen (2016) asserts:

> Power is manifest in multiple ways through study abroad. We can consider the differential power of nation-states to control and direct flows of students; the power of educational institutions to attract and retain international students; and the power of individual students to draw upon the social, cultural, economics, and mobility capital that arise from their family and peer networks. (p. 52)

It is therefore paramount to remember that these features encompass all movement of students between the US and Middle East; the benefits are not equal nor are they often intended to be. However, this reality does not negate the potential for international understanding and mutually-beneficial interactions to take place, it simply frames the context and environment of these activities. Thus a critical framework entails being aware of these power imbalances and their influence on student mobility, but to understand the ways in which these programs can still operate within that system, while still producing outcomes that are of mutual benefit.

Area 4: Otherness: Middle Eastern identity in the US

While SIA helps to narrow inquiry into the individual experiences of participants, the collective experience of this group must also be acknowledged. The final component of my theoretical framework therefore seeks to integrate an understanding of how the experiences of Middle Eastern students, and their identity formation, may be unique in terms of their social, political, and historical contexts. Edward Said's (1978, 1997) notion of the "Other" provides a profound insight into the ways in which Middle Eastern individuals are often understood from

the western perspective, particularly through media and literature. Plagued by bias and prejudice, much of what the West thinks of the East is steeped in misunderstanding that has reified the prominence of western culture over that of everywhere else. The core of such thinking still maintains, as public opinion confirms, creating an illusion of what many in the United States continue to believe represents the Middle East, its culture and people.

In navigating university life, Arshad Ali (2014) points out the relevance of what W.E.B. Du Bois referred to as double consciousness, or of "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity." In a similar vein, "young Muslims must constantly consider how "Americans" perceive of their actions," perceptions that have been historically rooted within the British-United States social and political context," which has not looked favorable upon these communities (Ali, 2014; Said, 1997). Though these Middle Eastern students have individual experiences and identities, which I seek to explore, the common identifiers they share contain ingrained assumptions by western perspectives; a fact that makes it necessary to acknowledge the historic and collective Otherness that has been attributed to them. By incorporating this perspective, I intend to locate the experiences of these students both within their own personal experiences as well as broader cultural and ideological contexts through which the identities of these students may be filtered.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Guided by the theoretical frameworks put forth in the previous chapter, this study examined the internationalization of higher education from a perspective where identity and meaning are always situated "within a specific, socially constructed world" (Berger, 1966). In order to understand how and in what ways international students make meaning of their roles, identities, and positions within internationalization programs, I utilized an interpretive qualitative approach that centralized the voices and perspectives of Middle Eastern international students. By prioritizing the knowledge and perspectives of this group of students, I highlight the ways in which their voices and identities have been left out of conversations around internationalization in the United States. In this chapter, I provide the components of my research design that sought to answer the following research question and sub-questions:

RQ: As it relates to the humanistic goals of internationalization, how do Middle Eastern international students understand and make meaning of their presence and identity at UCLA?

a. What are their feelings towards and experiences with internationalization?

b. How do they feel they have contributed to internationalization?

Research Design:

Pat Bazeley's (2013) distinction between methodology and methods in research helps to explain the features of my research design. In terms of methodology, which refers to "an analysis of how research does, or should proceed and necessarily reflects the politics embedded in theoretical frameworks," I chose an interpretive qualitative approach to centralize the voices of international students as active contributors to the universities in which they reside (Donaghy, 2016). An interpretative approach seeks to understand the meaning, "for participants in the study,

of the events, situations, experiences, and actions they are involved with or engage in" (Maxwell, 2013). However, like Ian Dey (2003), I used my methodology as a guide to inform my study rather than a set of reified rules to follow blindly. Ultimately, I used a qualitative approach to challenge traditional assumptions surrounding internationalization that overlook the identities and perspectives of international students in contributing to these processes.

In contrast, methods are the tools and strategies employed by the researcher to investigate a problem and find out what is going on (Bazeley, 2013). As such, my research methods were also qualitative in nature. Through employing focus groups and individual interviews I sought to emphasize the descriptive and interpretative analysis of environments, individuals, and social contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). A qualitative approach aligned naturally with the goals of this project, as I sought to understand how these students make meaning of their presence on US campuses and how their perceptions are influenced by the social context and structures around them (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Research Setting:

The setting for my research was a single institution of higher education: The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). UCLA is a large, public university located on the west coast of the United States, and was identified for its prolonged and extensive commitment to internationalization and international student recruitment, as well as its diverse student body. In 2018, the university enrolled over 3,700 international undergraduate students, which represented 12% of the entire undergraduate population. The 283 Middle Eastern international students on campus hailed from 10 different countries, providing an adequate sampling of students who meet the requirements for this study.

<center>**Data Collection and Analysis**</center>

In order to add validity and trustworthiness to the results of this study, as well as to provide a richer analysis of the international student perspective, I engaged in two different methods of data collection. The aim of such an approach was to triangulate data in a manner that "provides a rich and complex picture of some social phenomenon being studied" (Mathison, 1988). Bringing together data from two sources, focus groups and interviews, allowed me to both answer my research questions and do so in a manner that is more comprehensive and sensitive to the complexity and nuance of the designed research topic.

Focus Groups

During the fall 2018 and winter 2019, I coordinated and led focus group interviews in order to both a) capture the understanding and knowledge of a greater amount of students than would be attainable through only individual interviews (Krueger, 2000) and to b) better inform the approach and design of my subsequent interviews with select individuals through identifying "salient dimensions of complex social stimuli" (Lunt, 1996) (see Appendix A).

Throughout a three month span, I organized 4 focus group interviews with each interview session lasting between 1 to 2 hours and consisting of between 2-8 participants. The reasoning for this range of participants "stems from the goal that focus groups should include enough participants to yield diversity in information provided, yet they should not include too many participants because large groups can create an environment where participants do not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences" (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). I had not planned to have any focus groups with less than 3 participants, however, due to

participants not showing up or cancelling last minute, I was left with one group consisting of just 2 participants.

However, by conducting 4 sessions with 16 participants, I was able to ensure that the total number of participants reached 22 (or approximately 8% of the targeted population), which allowed a large enough sample to provide a diversity of perspectives and understandings, and ultimately, ensured a level of data saturation whereby further collection would have little additional interpretative worth (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Each of the focus group sessions consisted of students who met the requirements for the study (discussed further in the subsequent section). I strove to diversify each focus group based upon participant characteristics (e.g. home country, gender, age, etc.), however, due to a limited sample size of recruited participants, this was not always possible. Nonetheless, the focus group participants did, generally, end up representing diversity across the demographics surveyed (see Appendix D).

To conduct the focus groups, I served as the primary moderator. As the moderator, my role was to facilitate discussion through posing questions and ensuring all students are engaging in discussion (Krueger, 1994). Once the focus groups were concluded, I transcribed the recordings using Dedoose and analyzed the data using a constant comparative approach. While analyzing the data, I went through three rounds of coding including open coding, axial coding, and ultimately, selective coding which resulted in developing themes that reflected the content of each of the groups (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Interviews

In addition to focus groups, I also conducted individual interviews with 10 participants. The interviews were conducted in two rounds spaced out both before and after the focus group

interviews. The interviews followed an in-depth, descriptive and interpretive structure that focused on the participants' own experiences and how they made meaning of their presence at UCLA, in the context of internationalization (Siedman, 2013). I strove, through the sequence and design of my interview protocols, to generate interviews that were a pedagogical practice by facilitating the students to think and learn about their experiences through the questions I posed and the answers they provide. The aim was to guide students through a series of questions that would help to illuminate the complex topics that were central to this study, in a way that was empowering and student-centered rather than purely researcher-directed.

By conducting two rounds of interviews, the information produced in each was able to both inform the focus group interviews as well as build off of the emergent themes that resulted from the focus groups. In each round, I asked questions that allowed the participants to go deep into themes and experiences relevant to the study's focus (see Appendix B). Each interview took place in a private location at UCLA and was recorded via computer-based recording software Smart Record and then transcribed in as quickly a manner as possible after completion. Each interview lasted between 60-120 minutes.

Based upon Johnny Saldana's (2009) approach to data analysis, my interview transcripts were coded in two cycles using Dedoose computer software. Before initiating my first cycle of coding, I developed "broad topic codes" in order to guide the first cycle of analysis (Bazeley, 2013). Centered around the theoretical framework, literature review, and purpose of the study, I developed these a priori codes as a starting point for analysis, but with the understanding that they may change throughout the process as new codes emerged (Bazeley, 2013). The codes from the first cycle were both descriptive and interpretive in nature. Following Sharan Merriam's (1998) advice, I developed codes in the pursuit of my ultimate research goals: "our analysis and

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interpretation – our study's findings – will reflect the constructs, concepts, languages, models and theories that structured the study in the first place."

In the second cycle of coding, I sought to figure out and code relationships between the codes established in the first cycle by developing a "smaller and more select list of broader categories, themes, and/or concepts" (Saldana, 2009). When codes were unable to fit into an established category, a new category or subcategory was created to accommodate what the data was providing. As the data became more clear, I continually looked for emergent categories that would continue to hone in on the objective of understanding how the participants perceived and made meaning of their presence on campus, within the context of internationalization. Throughout this process, the codes and categories changed and became more refined as the story of the data became more salient (Saldana, 2009). To supplement the process, I used analytic memos to reflect on and make sense of my codes and categories. "There is a reciprocal relationship between the development of a doing system and the evolution of understanding a phenomenon," and I used analytical memos as a tool for understanding and making sense of the data (Weston et al., 2001).

Participant Profile and Recruitment

Participants selected for this study were chosen based on meeting the following criteria: a) were from a pre-identified list of countries,[7] b) identified as Middle Eastern international students, and c) were full-time undergraduate students at UCLA. The students self-identified based upon these criteria, a method that is the norm for studies of ethnicity and race (Marvasti,

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[7] For the purpose of this study, the Middle East is inclusive of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

2005). I particularly sought students who self-identified as Middle Eastern, rather than Arab or Muslim, because as Marvasti (2005) points out, there are many Middle Eastern people who do not speak Arabic (and therefore cannot be Arab) and there are many Middle Easterners, in fact the majority in America, who are not Muslim. Therefore it was necessary to recruit students who self-identified as Middle Eastern, in order to capture the population of students relevant to the goals of this study.

To recruit participants for the focus groups, I conducted a recruitment survey that was distributed across the UCLA campus through various channels and stakeholders. The Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars, the International Education Office, the International Institute, the Arab Student Society, the Muslim Student Association, the Turkish Student Association, and the International Student Coalition, were all asked to disseminate a recruitment email (with the embedded survey) via their respective listservs and rosters (Appendix C). The recruitment survey served as a screening process and asked the respondents preliminary questions to determine eligibility and select the students for participation (Appendix D). In the end, 16 eligible students participated in focus group interviews.

Students recruited for individual interviews were selected both through the focus group interviews as well as through recommendations from faculty and international student professionals who regularly interacted with international students. Of those who confirmed interest, I selected 10 with which to have semi-structured, individual interviews. The 10 students were selected based upon meeting the criteria of the study and their representation across gender, age, and home country characteristics. The individual interviews served as an opportunity for deep exploration into the topics and themes that I, as the primary investigator, had identified as well as those that emerged through the focus group interviews.

TABLE 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Gender	Age	Year	Home Country	Major	Interview Type
Betül	Female	21	4th	Turkey	Human Biology and Society	Individual Focus Group
Ali	Male	21	3rd	Iran	Film	Individual Focus Group
Kubra	Female	20	4th	Sudan UAE	Political science Psychology	Individual Focus Group
Orhan	Male	18	2nd	Egypt	Computer Engineering	Individual Focus Group
Ahmed	Male	21	4th	UAE	Economics	Individual
Jana	Female	21	4th	Jordan	Political Science	Individual
Sarah	Female	18	2nd	UAE India	Economics Linguistics and Computer Science	Individual
Noor	Female	19	2nd	Iran	Physics	Individual
Nailah	Female	20	3rd	Egypt	Ecology and Evolutionary Biology	Individual
Asim	Male	22	5th	Egypt	Biology	Individual
Fatima	Female	21	4th	Egypt USA	Sociology	Focus Group
Kalie	Female	21	4th	Iran	History Middle Eastern Studies	Focus Group
Heidi	Female	20	3rd	Egypt	Computer Science & Engineering Applied Math	Focus Group
Madiha	Female	21	3rd	Pakistan	Economics	Focus Group
Taamir	Male	24	5th	Iran	Psychology	Focus Group
Emine	Female	20	3rd	Turkey	Economics	Focus Group
Iman	Male	19	2nd	Jordan Saudi Arabia	Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology	Focus Group
Mustafa	Male	36	4th	Morocco	Economics French	Focus Group
Malik	Male	20	3rd	Lebanon Saudi Arabia	Mechanical Engineering Economics	Focus Group
Abdel	Male	20	3rd	Lebanon	Mechanical Engineering	Focus Group
Sadira	Female	21	3rd	Syria	Neuroscience	Focus Group
Hakim	Male	20	2nd	Iran	Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics	Focus Group

Positionality:

As an American male, my interest in understanding how Middle Eastern students make meaning of their presence in the US is inspired by two fundamental experiences in my own life: first, coming of age in post 9-11 America and second, my time spent traveling and living in countries around the world, including and most especially, the Middle East.

As a child growing up in a small town in California my exposure to the Middle East or people from that region was limited, by which I mean non-existent. As a result, my early understanding of the Middle East came almost entirely from the media, which was saturated with violent imagery and war reports from far-off places such as Baghdad, Kabul, and Palestine. Like many of my peers, I became accustomed to watching movies of the wars in the region, hearing Arabic sayings on the TV, and seeing the faces of Middle Eastern people on the television; all of which ignited my initial interest in understanding this terribly complex and misunderstood area of the world. However, it wasn't until college that my understanding of the Middle East grew as I began to study Arabic and Turkish and immerse myself in studying the Middle East, its politics, culture, and people. My growing interest in the region prompted my two stints living in Turkey, the first in 2010 as an exchange student and the second in 2012 as a Fulbright scholar.

Throughout my time living abroad, I have realized just how powerful the presence of a foreigner can be on the perceptions and opinions of others. In Turkey, as one of only two Americans in a small, central Anatolian city, I realized that in the eyes of many of my students, I represented much more than myself; I represented America and their understanding of what it meant to be *an American*. They associated my characteristics and views with those of every American and I found myself incredibly aware of the responsibility they were, implicitly, assigning to me. While the Fulbright program had called upon us to be "public diplomats," it

wasn't until these personal interactions with my students, community members, and colleagues, that I truly began to appreciate the influence my presence and actions had on the perceptions and opinions of those around me. It is from these experiences, and the impact they had upon me, that I approach this research; with a belief in the transformational power of individuals, and students in particular, to be part of creating a more peaceful, understanding world.

Limitations:

As with most qualitative studies, my findings cannot nor should not be fully generalizable to all Middle Eastern international students or international programs. Social and political environments matter when looking at the experiences and perspectives of individuals, and accordingly my findings may well have been different had I looked at universities in different geographic locations, such as the Midwest or East Coast, let alone in different countries. In fact, many of the participants spoke about how their experiences likely would have been different (i.e. worse) had they been at a university not located in one of the most liberal areas in America. With more resources, a comparative study across the United States would surely have revealed more robust findings, but alas, that remains an area of exploration for future research.

Additionally, while identity was a central component of this study, I intentionally focused primarily on the participants' Middle Eastern identity because, as I learned from the participants, it was this identity marker that they saw as most impacting their experience with internationalization. In fact, as will be highlighted in Chapter 5, being Middle Eastern often seemed to overshadow any other of the participants' identities, such as religion or nationality. Therefore, the goal was to understand the shared experiences amongst this group of students

rather than differentiate between their experiences. For this reason, an analysis of certain identity markers, such as class, gender, or race, was left outside of the scope of the current project.

Furthermore, I am compelled to acknowledge both a challenge and an important discovery that came to light through the course of conducting this research: the imperfectness of identity and labels. While I recruited students who were "Middle Eastern" and "International" my own definitions of these terms turned out to be, at times, different than those of my participants. Despite my efforts to clearly define how and why I was using these categories, some of the participants had questions about their home countries being included in the "Middle East," particularly participants from Pakistan, Iran, Morocco, and Turkey. In discussing with them how they defined the Middle East, they all agreed that there was some shared experience, culture, and history that grouped the region together, however, the fragility of such a distinction was not lost on them, nor myself. Despite the fact that they all viewed themselves as having a Middle Eastern identity, some did challenge why I included their countries. I explained that my decision to include a wide-scope of countries was based upon my desire to interview students who identified themselves as Middle Eastern and therefore it was important to cast a wide net when setting the parameters of countries to include.

Additionally, the very notion of what it means to be international was also not something that was consistent among the participants. While I recruited specially for "international students," I realized quickly that I was recruiting from a university perspective, which defines international students through the lens of visa status (Clark, 2009). What became apparent was that visa status is not the most salient factor for many students when considering whether or not they see themselves as international. Thus, some of the students who participated in this study were not labeled as international by the university, but identified themselves as international

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students nonetheless. Despite this, I chose to include their stories and insights because in almost all ways they reflected, reinforced, and further illuminated what I heard from the other participants.

CHAPTER 5: MIDDLE EASTERN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTITY

My identity took a more of a fluid shape because when you're no longer in your home country…
you try to figure out where you stand exactly

Having spent little time outside of his native United Arab Emirates, Ahmed never had much cause to reflect on his own identity. Rooted in his family, his nationality (Emirati), and his religion (Islam), Ahmed's identity was straightforward, it was simply laid out for him. He was, as he saw it, just a normal person. Which is why he never anticipated just how much his identity would change when he arrived at UCLA in the Fall of 2014. In addition to the normal nerves that accompany any first-year student, Ahmed quickly began to realize how different he was from the dominant culture around him. It wasn't hard to see the absence of mosques in the cityscape or the lack of people who looked like him or spoke his native language. Being a minority for the first time in his life, Ahmed began to develop a newfound awareness of the role and importance of identity. He began critically reflecting on his position in the world: how he related to those around him and other people related to him. The picture that emerged from this introspection was something that would influence Ahmed's entire experience at UCLA.

The first thing Ahmed realized was that as a result of so few students knowing anything about the UAE, his identity began to move from Emirati to the broader and more accessible category of Middle Eastern. Despite never having identified strongly as a Middle Easterner before, Ahmed found that identifying himself as Middle Eastern, rather than just Emirati, was something that domestic students, with their limited knowledge of the region, seemed to be able to grasp and comprehend more easily. However, while identifying as Middle Eastern may have been easier than explaining to everyone where the UAE is located, it also came with a substantial amount of baggage. Through his interactions and observations on campus, he realized that being

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Middle Eastern was different than being just any minority student. In America, even at its most liberal, being Middle Eastern came with a set of particularly negative stereotypes and connotations. Derogatory questions, though often not ill-intended, such as "do you ride camels to school," would serve as a constant reminder for Ahmed that being Middle Eastern in the United States meant being looked upon in a certain, and often negative, way.

While the American culture may look down upon the Middle East, it has not stopped Ahmed from making friends or enjoying his experience at UCLA. However, there are few times when Ahmed is ever *not* aware of his identity or how others might be viewing him. An awareness born out of knowing that his identity is often inseparable from his connection to the Middle East. This is one of the reasons he tends to group himself with other Middle Eastern students because he can just be himself, without worry about how he might be perceived or responded to. Four years into his education, Ahmed is accepting of the fact that by coming to UCLA, he is no longer just himself; he is an international student, a minority, and a person whose identity is bound in misunderstanding and negativity. He is now, more than anything, Ahmed from the Middle East.

This initial findings chapter is focused on identity development because, as Ahmed's story demonstrates, experiences with identity fluidity and change were prominent for all of the participants. Their new identities in the US not only influenced how others saw them, but how they saw themselves, and ultimately, how they constructed and made meaning of their presence on campus. The decision to explore identity as a starting point to this interpretive research is supported by a Social Identity Approach which "addresses how psychological processes (such as identity formation) interact with social and political processes in the explanation of human social behavior" (Reicher et al., 2010). As such, I approach this chapter with the perspective that how

the participants' experienced and understood their presence at UCLA is directly related to how they perceived of their own identity on campus. This perspective is validated by prior research which has demonstrated how minority students often form their identities in response to their interactions with a dominant culture, which in turn can significantly alter their lived experience by making them feel abnormal or excluded from the society (Schmitt et al., 2003; Searle & Ward, 1990).

Therefore, before any attempt to appreciate the experiences and perspectives of the participants can take place, I considered it necessary to first understand the participants' identities both before and after coming to UCLA. In tracing identity across such a transformative time in the participants' lives, I was interested in understanding how their new environment might have impacted their own self-identity and in return informed the ways and spaces in which they engaged with their domestic peers and the campus community.

Identity Awareness Before Coming to the United States

Regardless of home country, there were consistent elements the participants highlighted when discussing their identity before coming to the United States. Because most of the countries of the Middle East are more homogenous than the United States, almost all of the participants reported never thinking much about their identity prior to arriving in the US. In explaining his lack of self-reflection before coming to the US, Ali, a participant from Iran, observed that "back in Iran, I was from Tehran… So if you are from Tehran or are a Fars… if you have the proper accent, that is a privilege. You are normal. Everyone else is different." Orhan, a participant from Egypt, expanded on this sentiment by explaining, "At home, I was normal… above average, but normal." In other words, elements of privilege insulated Ali and Orhan from ever having to consciously reflect on their identity or what its implications on their life. Effectively, as was the

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case for most of the students, their prior identities were almost invisible to them due to being consistently part of the majority in their home countries, which equated to seeing themselves as "normal."

When reflecting on how this feeling of normalcy develops, Nailah explained that "in school you're surrounded by people with your same culture, your same education and all these things. So that's mainly what it is, I think [that forms your identity]." Nailah' statement highlights how where you grow up can both facilitate and inhibit the development of personal and identity awareness. As Ahmed explained, "I didn't really give my identity much thought when I was back home because, you know, it was kind of like laid out for me. It was like, 'this is who you are.'"

Interestingly, this lack of investigation of one's identity was true for the majority of the participants regardless of their religious affiliation. One reason for this could be that in order to pay for the high tuition and living costs in the US, many international students from the developing world tend to come from a higher class or economic levels that might insulate them from feelings of discrimination or otherness within their home countries (Larsen, 2016). This lack of identity awareness is not unique to international students but is consistent with research on first-year domestic students as well (Upcraft et al., 2005).

While most of the participants reported never having thought too deeply about their identity before coming to the US, there were exceptions, in particular participants who were ethnic minorities or non-citizens of the country they grew up in. For participants who grew up in Middle Eastern countries that were not where their family was from or where they were born, the notion of self-identity was much more salient and scrutinized. For these students (Betül, Noor, Taamir, and Kubra), their background growing up in a society in which they were not the ethnic

or cultural majority influenced how and how often they thought about their own identity. With parents from Sudan, Kubra always felt like a minority in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), however, that did not mean that she felt completely like an outsider. As she explains, "At home, I am still a minority because Sudanese aren't looked on super favorably, but I still felt like I am Arab." Betül, who is Turkish but grew up in Saudi Arabia, had a similar experience with becoming aware of her identity in her youth. She reflected, "When I started being introduced to people from different ethnicities [in Saudi Arabia], that is when I started to realize… I just started to form this sort of identity, like I am Turkish." Betül goes on to mention that in Saudi Arabia, being Turkish was seen in a positive light due to the extent to which Turkish soap operas had spread to the Gulf and popularized Turkey and many aspects of its culture. Yet, these experiences were in the minority across the participants, as the majority expressed that prior to coming to the US, they were relatively unaware of their identity due to feeling normal within their own countries and amongst their peers.

Becoming a Minority: Impacts of a New Cultural Environment on Student Identity

Consistent with the literature on international identity formation, all the participants described a process of identity change when they came to the US and UCLA (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 1993). Within their new environment, students were confronted with a variety of situations and interactions that very quickly began to alter the way they viewed themselves and their presence on campus. This phenomena is not a new experience for international students as much literature has sought to explain and describe the process of this identity change. As Kim (2012) reminds us, "Several scholars emphasize the importance of identity development in social contexts and suggest that one's sense of self is shaped by how individuals interact with others

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within the environments." Indeed, through interactions in their new UCLA environment, the participants began to perceive of their identity in contrast to the dominant culture (Schmitt, Spears & Branscombe, 2003).

While interviewing the participants it became very clear that all of them experienced an involuntary identity shift as a result of their new social environment. As Kubra put it, "You think of yourself in context, so when the context changes so does your thinking." For the participants, coming to the US marked a change in how they viewed themselves and disrupted their previous perceptions of their own identity. They no longer compared themselves to their peers from their home countries, but in relation to Americans, and what they realized was that, as one participant put it, "these people are really different from me." Such feelings of difference led the participants to begin to identify themselves in relation to Americans, as Taamir reflected, "Well, I am not an American, I am from Iran…so yes, I am Middle Eastern." Taamir's reflection is a wonderful example of how the participants' frame of reference began to change in the US and how they began to articulate their own identities in contrast to the dominant identity around them. Ahmed describes in even more precise language just how impactful this new environment and the way people responded to him was on his own identity:

> [When] I first came here I was very open about my identity or at least I wasn't thinking about that much because I hadn't thought about it that much for the past 18 years. But then, you know, I guess like after some time and like seeing things here in the US, you kind of start asking yourself or reflecting. I guess through contact with other people and like how they identify themselves and how I see myself positioned relative to them then I started to ask the question of "who am I?"

Experiences such as this underscore how a new university environment influenced the way in which the participants saw themselves and accentuated a feeling of difference. As a result, their experiences with identity change were not neutral, but were movements directly into the status of

being a minority. Experiencing this status for the first time resulted in the participants developing a heightened sense of their own identity throughout their tenure at the university.

Not Just Another Minority: Being Middle Eastern on a US Campus

While the existing scholarship on international student identity formation does an adequate job of explaining the process of identity fluidity or change that these students experience (Bhabha, 1994; Kim, 2012; Kramsch, 1993), the findings in this section demonstrate that they largely fail to appreciate the difficult and often times discriminatory experiences that influence the identities of many international students, particularly those from the Middle East who face increased scrutiny and prejudice (Lee & Rice, 2007). Finding themselves in a foreign country and culture, the participants were confronted with new interactions, stereotypes, and experiences with "neo-racism" that ultimately served as the catalyst for major shifts within their identity (Lee & Rice, 2012; Maira, 2004; McMurtie, 2001).

Scholars of the Middle East have long found evidence for Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson's (1995) observation that "racial stereotypes are deeply woven into the fabric of US society" (Solorzano et al., 2000). Starting with Edward Said (1978), scholars have documented how American media and popular narratives continuously depict Middle Eastern people through racist and derogatory stereotypes (Eltantawy, 2013; Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016; Šisler, 2008). Sadly, Said's observation in 1978 is as true today as it was then:

> In newsreels or news-photos, the Arab is always shown in large numbers. No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences. Most of the pictures represent mass rage and misery, or irrational (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures. Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of jihad. (p. 287)

The participants were not naïve to this reality and were all too aware of the commonplace portrayals of Middle Eastern people as being barbaric and uncivilized. Even on a liberal and

progressive campus like UCLA, they found that these images and stereotypes of the Middle East informed not only how others saw them as individuals, but eventually, how they began to identify themselves.

For some participants, the realization that in America they were going to be seen in a particular light happened from nearly the moment they walked off the plane at LAX. When Madiha arrived in the US to come to school at UCLA, she was immediately confronted with what it feels like to be looked at as Middle Eastern in America:

> I got randomly selected, and they found this [children's] book and asked if it was the Quran (it was not)… and she questioned me and told me it was not allowed here, so she took it and threw it away.

Being from Pakistan, Madiha did not typically think of herself as Middle Eastern, but this initial experience quickly made her realize the consequence of being perceived as Middle Eastern in the US. However, for other participants, arriving in the US was filled less with explicit discrimination as it was experiences of losing part of their individual identity in favor of a group identity. Taamir explained how his identity changed with each place he lived and how in the US, he suddenly became Middle Eastern.

> When I was in Turkey, I was Iranian, when I was in Cyprus, I was Iranian, when I was in the Netherlands I was Iranian, then suddenly I came here and I was… for sure Middle Eastern… well, this had a big effect.

This quote not only embodies the fluidity of these students' identities, but also the complexity of coming into a society with very different racial and identity constructs than they might otherwise have been exposed. Yet, regardless of the level of personal discrimination experienced, every participant was aware that their assigned Middle Eastern identity was not neutral, but that it came with a host of negative connotations, stereotypes, and misconceptions. Being a Middle Eastern

student in the US meant that the participants were not only minorities, but they were minorities with a particularly poor image in American society. Kubra explained it this way:

> Like I've never felt like such a minority until I came here, that's what shifted. At home, I am still a minority because Sudanese aren't looked on super favorably, but I still felt like I am Arab. But here I am clearly a minority and I am a minority that people don't like. I am not Asian, I am not the model minority.

Ali summarized this point succinctly when he stated, "I was privileged [in Iran], and now I am not privileged here anymore." Both these participants are pointing out the reality of how being Middle Eastern in the US is a position with relatively low privilege, even compared to that of other minority groups.

One of the primary ways in which this new identity was ingrained into the participants was through their interactions with those around them. In trying to figure out who he was, Ahmed reflects that he started asking himself, "how are these other people treating me?" For all the participants, being in the US, and reflecting on how they were being treated, made them identify more strongly as Middle Eastern while simultaneously making them more conscious of their identity. Taamir summed up just how strong of an influence interactions with Americans at UCLA had been on his own identity: "The experiences we have had here have defined us as Middle Eastern rather than our own identities. Because they (Americans) don't approach us as individuals."

At times explicit and at others implicit, American's negative association of the Middle East and outright ignorance of the region served to strongly reinforce the participants feelings, and thus identity, of being foreigners and others. In explaining the difference of being from Europe vs. the Middle East, Taamir explained that it is normal for domestic students to not know very much about the home countries/regions of international students, but what sets Middle Eastern students apart is the negative connotation.

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If you think about it, I don't know anything about Britain, so we can't expect others to know what is going on in the Middle East, but it is that negative connotation. I don't know what is going on in Britain, but I don't have a generalized negative connotation with all of Northern Europe.

Orhan expanded on how the US views people from the Middle East by giving an example between being Russian and Middle Eastern.

You know the Habib [the fighter]? So every Russia is like now, oh "I am with Habib." But with us it's the opposite… it's with Bin Laden… people are like "do you know bin Laden?" And you are like no. So there is this negative association and people just classify you because they don't know. Like these are the Egyptians, these are the Mexicans… but these are the terrorists, Egypt is in the Middle East, terrorists are in the Middle East.

Repeatedly, the stereotype of being associated with terrorism or an underdeveloped society was brought up by the participants in describing their interactions with others and the outlooks that Americans hold regarding their home countries (Said, 1978). Nailah, expressing a similar view, explained how Middle Eastern students are not only different, like all international students relative to their domestic peers, but different in an undesirable way.

I think that we [international students] have similarities but in just different specific aspects. If you get what I mean? Like similar in the fact that we get treated differently, a little bit, just knowing that "OK you're not from here," but different knowing that we're Arabs. That's a little bit of a disadvantage.

Other participants, including Fatima agreed, stating that what separates Middle Eastern students from other international students is indeed "the negative connotation." However, it is not just a negative connotation that sends a strong message to these students about their identity, it is also the ignorance about the Middle East that perpetuates an image of otherness and facilitates a view of Middle Eastern students as all being from the same place. Sadira explained how her identity was forced to shift from being Syrian to being Middle Eastern upon coming to the US in order for the people she met to understand where she was actually from: "People [don't] know where Syria is, so when I would say I am from the Middle East, they were able to

better understand where I am from. So I would introduce myself as Middle Eastern." This underscores just how little Americans know about the Middle East and in fact, many of the participants expressed their utter dismay at how little Americans knew about the Middle East. Speaking on this topic Nailah made clear that it is less about what they know than it is the fact that they just don't know very much: "At a certain point I feel like the problem is [that] a larger portion of the people actually don't even know, like [they] are ignorant and like they don't even know that much about it [the Middle East]."

Yet, perhaps most representative of Americans' lack of knowledge and implicit prejudice towards the Middle East is that fact that every one of the participants recalled situations in which they, or close acquaintances, were burdened with questions such as, "do you ride camels?", "do you have the internet?", or "isn't that were the terrorists are?" These questions serve to communicate to the participants just how foreign and unknown they were to their American peers. These experiences validate similar findings that demonstrate how students from Islamic or Middle Eastern countries face more discrimination than other students (Lee & Rice, 2007). They also accurately reflect the observation that Edward Said (1978) made 50 years ago when he wrote, "Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers." Unfortunately, still today, in one of America's most liberal cities and public institutions, Said's words still hold true. For the participants, these interactions and experiences did not necessarily result in explicit forms of prejudice or feelings of being discriminated against (in fact, many noted that they found UCLA students to be very accepting), but confirmed for the participants that their Middle Eastern identity was not looked upon favorably.

Grouping Together: Push and Pull Factors

In addition to the participants identifying themselves relative to Americans, the participants all spoke about how at UCLA they were consistently grouped together with other Middle Eastern students. Though international student grouping is a topic that has been researched extensively, much of it tends to frame the existence of such groups as a result of "self-segregation" on the part of the international students (Hail, 2015; Zhang, 2018). However, the findings presented here support an alternative line of research that recognizes numerous reasons for the international-domestic student segregation visible on many college campuses (Fincher & Shaw, 2009; Kwon et al., 2019). The findings of this project suggest that there are both push and pull factors that explain the motivations behind this phenomena. I define push factors as those that exist largely outside of the participant; they are pieces of the surrounding culture and society that communicate to the participants that they belong within a particular group. Conversely, the pull factors are those that motivate the participants to associate themselves within a particular group. Together, these factors combine to reinforce the participants' feelings of belonging to a Middle Eastern group and strengthen Middle Eastern as a central part of their identity.

Push Factors

The participants described seemingly endless examples of how they often felt that Americans grouped them together rather than seeing them as individuals with unique characteristics and histories. Taamir explained this sentiment by stating that in the US there is a "political influence right now that combines us; for example the association with terrorism and

how we get all clumped together as Middle Eastern, instead of seeing the diversity." Taamir believed that Middle Eastern students are often grouped together as a result of being in a dominant, white culture:

> I feel like since we are in a white society… in LA…so if you are comparing our cultures with the dominant culture, this is why we feel this unity… I am not saying we are not unified though. I am saying the way we understand the Middle East is the way outsiders see us. They clump us all together.

In her own words, Noor also described the relevance of the dominant culture in prompting Americans to group Middle Eastern students together. She explained that in many ways it is no one's individual fault, but a result of diverging cultures and a lack of understanding between groups:

> There is this clash between like East and West. Even when it's people I hang out with, they are primarily Middle Easterners because other people just don't get me, and it is not their fault cause I don't get them either. We just have this weird culture gap and growing up in different places and those sorts of things.

Betül spoke in even more strong terms when explaining how American culture itself has historically sought to actively segregate foreign or minority groups:

> It is an American thing, they put people into groups from where they come from. Like Japanese internment camps or Koreatown or Chinatown. I don't find it weird when people ask me about where I am from… it is part of their culture. It's been happening here forever.

Betül, and all the participants, saw segregation as a characteristic of US society; that in many ways, segregating people into groups was something inherent to American culture. The participants are not the first to make this insight, as scholars have written at length on the dominance of a white culture in America. Explaining this phenomena, African American feminist Patricia Hill Collins (1986) explained that in America binaries are created to reify assumed differences between groups. She contended that "these binaries gain their meaning in relation to their difference from their oppositional counterparts." Hadi Khoshneviss (2019)

expands upon this insight in the context of the Middle Eastern experience, arguing that

"Dichotomization as a relational process, despite its ostensible simplicity, results in intricate

relations of exclusion and oppression. It creates two opposite extremes with exclusively opposite

characteristics, it coerces the 'other' into the farthest extreme." At UCLA, the participants

experienced this identity dichotomy, with their identity and culture on one end and an American

culture on the other. This binary often manifested in a form of double consciousness in which the

participants' saw their identity broken up between how they saw themselves versus how they

were viewed by others (Du Bois, 2008). Ultimately, the participants all felt very strongly that

their American peers, guided by American culture, were quick to group them together as a

cohesive group and this external grouping played a major role in shifting their own identity to

one based in being Middle Eastern.

Pull Factors

Despite the influence of American culture and society pushing the participants into a

single group, the participants were also very aware of the fact that they too were involved in

giving that impression to domestic students and in grouping themselves together as Middle

Easterners. As Noor put it:

> I do understand why some people think the Middle East is all the same. Cause at UCLA
> we are all from different countries, but we all gather together… like we are all Arab, but
> we are from different countries. So we have the connection and similarity. So I can see
> how others get that perspective that we are all the same.

Noor's comment suggests that it is not that the grouping of Middle Eastern students is

completely inaccurate, but rather that it lacks an awareness of the nuance and complexity of this

grouping. Abdel picked up on this sentiment:

I mean there are differences in the Middle East, but I see where they [domestic students] are coming from because I can see how it plays out here. Like I am here, from Lebanon, and then I meet a bunch of Middle Eastern people and we all do have a similarity. So when we group together, it is like we are all from the same place. At least to the people here… so when an outsider looks at it, they think we are all just Middle Eastern. But for us, we know the differences between us.

As the participants explained, there is a natural pull for international students from the same region to group together with one another when placed into a foreign environment. This is consistent with research demonstrating that international students often feel more comfortable staying within familiar cultural or language groups (Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2007; Dunne 2009). The reason for this may have something to do with the fact that "attempts at help-seeking and network development within mainstream spheres usually occur within the context of differential power relations and within social contexts that are culturally different from, if not alienating to, cultural outsiders" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). This makes it easier for international students to connect with students with a similar "outsider" background (Tajfel, 1978).

For the participants, this pull towards one another was articulated in two ways: as a result of feeling more comfortable with students who shared aspects of their own culture and as a way to maintain their connection to their home country and culture. Speaking to why he tends to gravitate towards other Middle Eastern students, Abdel provided a helpful analogy:

When someone from Ohio meets someone from NY, they would be like cool, but if they met in California, they would think "oh we are from close together." So being in a foreign place kinda pushes you to find smaller similarities with people that you would not care about in your home context.

Similarly, Orhan observed that:

When you come to UCLA, you look for similarities, so you have more in common with a South American student rather than an in-state student. So the environment kind of molds your situation.

What Orhan and Abdel's comments make clear is that it is not just Middle Eastern students with whom the participants felt a connection, but to a certain extent all international students because they share a similar experience. However, on the continuum of similarity, being international is one component, but being a Middle Eastern international student expands that shared identity dramatically.

However, the pull towards grouping themselves with other students from similar backgrounds was not just a result of a desire for comfortability, but for many of my participants, was also a conscious decision to stay connected to their identity and culture despite going through a process of integration and in many cases, westernization. Asim articulated this motivation as a type of "cultural pride" that is important to stay connected to:

> I try to make the Arab identity a bigger part of who I am than it could be because I want to be surrounded by people who speak Arabic, that is something big for me, I don't want to forget my language and I want my children to know the language, so heritage is just something very crucial for me. So being in the Arab club I try to speak Arabic all the time with the people around me and I try to keep it going. I don't want people to get westernized and forget who they are. It is so critical that even though we come to the United States and try to integrate, I think we integrate to make our lives easy but we also need to maintain our diversity and appreciate it a little more, which is something that not everyone does.

Betül explained a similar motivation when she explained how she was very proud of her nationality and "likes people to know that she is Turkish," which is a major factor that compelled her to connect with other Turks and Turkish organizations. For both Betül and Asim, as well as many of the participants, student groups were brought up as a place/space for them to come together with other students with similar cultural backgrounds and provided opportunities for them to stay connected to their home culture. Whether it is through clubs or simply in social settings, the participants were clear in explaining the pull they felt to connect themselves with other Middle Eastern students based either on a desire for familiarity or cultural pride.

Conclusion

Marvasti (2005) has found that Middle Eastern individuals in America often exhibit fluidity within their identity as a response to living within a culture that looks down upon their home culture and region. My research supports these findings and demonstrates how Middle Eastern international students experience their own unique form of identity fluidity upon coming to the United States. In coming to UCLA, not only did they become much more aware and reflective of their own identity, but the very ways in which they identified themselves changed in response to their new surroundings.

Through being confronted with a new cultural and sometimes hostile environment, including interactions with other students, faculty, staff, and social structures, the students began to see their identities in response to the dominant culture around them. As a result, participants reported feeling much more Middle Eastern than they ever had before. With this new identity came experiences of otherness and misunderstanding that both contributed to and reinforced the feeling that they were indeed "different" and "minorities" in this new space. These findings demonstrate how common frameworks around international student identity formation, such as "in-betweeness" (Bhabha, 1994) or "third place identities" (Kramsch, 1993), fail to adequately appreciate the impact of orientalism and prejudice on the identity formation of students from the Middle East.

CHAPTER 6: PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES WITH CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

Trying our food, seeing our cultural performances, and just being exposed… to be able to give [domestic students] a little bit more of an idea of what Turkey is all about, I think that is the main goal.

Before coming to the US, Betül was well aware of the negative views that American culture and society held about the Middle East. She had seen the movies and heard the news that often seemed to demonize Middle Easterners. However, coming to America she was still struck by the sheer amount of destructive narratives surrounding the Middle East as well as by just how little any of her domestic peers seemed to know about the region. In response to this new environment, it became very important for Betül to do what she could to counter these negative messages by sharing her culture and perspective with her American classmates and friends. Of course, she had her own critiques about happenings in her home country of Turkey, as well as in the Middle East, but with so much negative information circulating about the region, she felt like she has a responsibility to show the positive aspects of the region. In fact, she began to see herself as an ambassador of sorts, someone who could fill the void that existed in America's knowledge of the Middle East. After all, who better to do it? She had grown up in several countries across the Middle East and the other students on campus already seemed to look at her as an authority on the region.

So, in addition to always being her regular, friendly self, Betül would often go out of her way to represent the Middle East and to share her culture with those around her. She became actively involved in the Turkish Student Association, which in addition to giving her a much needed connection to her home country, also allowed her to make Turkish culture visible on campus through coordinated events and performances. In addition, she always wore a Tree of Life necklace, hung a Turkish flag on her backpack, and frequently wore clothing depicting

Middle Eastern and Turkish culture. She did these things because she noticed that when she did, domestic students would often come up and ask her about them. This would then give her an opportunity to share positive features about the region. Even in the classroom, she would speak up or make herself heard when topics related to the Middle East came up. At times, that even included non-verbal forms of communication, such as changing her body language or shaking her head when she disagreed with something being said. Her hope was that by being visible on campus or providing her unique perspective, students around her would be exposed to a different view of the Middle East and begin to recognize that different perspectives exist. The more she interacted with students on campus, the more Betül knew that they often looked at her as a representative of the region, so she took great responsibility in ensuring that she was doing everything she could to use that status in a way that would improve understanding and awareness of the Middle East, including her home country, Turkey.

Betül's narrative depicts what many of the participants experienced during their time at UCLA and how they came to view their diplomatic presence on campus. Building off of the insights provided by Betül, this chapter digs into a central question of this dissertation: how do the participants understand their presence on campus and their role in contributing to the humanistic outcomes of internationalization (e.g. intercultural understanding, international awareness, etc.)? The connection between the participants' Middle Eastern identity and their experiences on campus is a direct one: as a result of being seen as Middle Eastern the participants found that they also had become individual representatives of the Middle East. A realization that informed both how they viewed their influence on campus as well as how they engaged with others.

The participants' view of themselves as representatives of the Middle East is partially captured by the work of Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson (1995) who defined "spokesperson pressure" to explain how black students, and minority students in general, are "called upon to be representatives of all Black people during classroom discussions and social conversations, especially about topics related to racial dynamics and racism" (Watkins et al., 2010). Additionally, Caryn Block et al. (2011) has found that being put into a representative position (formed through spokesperson pressure) has a direct impact on the actions and interactions of minorities. Consistent with these findings, the participants of this study were aware of the fact that in almost anything they did on campus, they would be representing the Middle East, whether knowingly or unknowingly . This knowledge influenced how they perceived of their presence on campus and their interactions with others, as they sought to counter the negative stereotypes associated with a Middle Eastern identity.

Representing More Than Yourself

When describing how they saw their presence on campus, the participants used terms like "ambassadors," "diplomats," "educators," and "representatives" to describe the new role they had taken on, often unbeknownst to them at first. In step with their identities becoming more Middle Eastern-centric, nearly all the participants noticed that those around them on campus were treating them as representatives of the Middle East. However, this reality came with some serious challenges for the participants. Not only did they have the pressure to speak on behalf of an entire population, but they had the added pressure of speaking on behalf of a region whose image in America was particularly mired in negativity. In his own words, Orhan provided a

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beautifully insightful description of how, as a Middle Eastern man, his actions are often viewed

and interpreted by those around him:

> When you hear stereotypes, even if you know they aren't true, when you meet someone
> who is like that, it just fuels that stereotype and you think "I knew it." But when you meet
> someone who is not like that, it breaks it down and they think "oh okay, they are not like
> the stereotype." But I'll be honest if you are like the stereotype, that is going to be more
> impactful than if you are going against it.

Orhan's comments are an apt example of the pressure that stereotypes can put on minority

students as described by Steele and Aronson (1995). Observing the impact of negative

stereotypes on African American students, Steele and Aronson coined the term stereotype threat

as:

> a social-psychological predicament that can arise from widely known negative
> stereotypes about one's group ... the existence of such a stereotype means that anything
> one does or -any of one's features that conform to it make the stereotypes more plausible
> as a self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one's own eyes. (p.
> 797)

> For most of the participants, their experiences and interactions with domestic students on

campus began to open their eyes to the representative role that they were inherently playing.

They noticed that when their peers knew little about the Middle East, they could educate them;

they noticed that when others held negative stereotypes about the Middle East, they could be a

counter to those prejudiced views; and they noticed that when they formed relationships with

domestic students, those students began to form a personal connection to the Middle East. As a

result, the participants came to more fully appreciate the role they played on campus. For

example, Betül saw herself as an "informal diplomat," underscoring the fact that while she saw

herself as an individual, she also recognized that her voice and presence on campus could have

larger implications.

> For me I do kind of feel like I am representing someone Turkish. Not like speaking on
> behalf of other Turkish people… like not representing the whole of Turkey, but at the

same time I do feel like I do represent my country in some ways. Like an informal diplomat…

Ahmed agreed with Betül, underscoring that he saw himself as representing various parts of his own identity: "it's a natural thing… I'm an ambassador of my country, of my people, my family." Similarly, Orhan made a distinction between feeling like he not was a representative of his country's people, but not the government:

> The diplomat thing he (another participant) said is true… it's all about the people you represent, because in the end, we are all the same… all we want to do is have enough money to get by and have our kids have a better future. Everywhere. So we can show people we are just like them, we just want a stable job. Like it is not just about governments…we are representing people, not the government!

For other participants, they felt this representation in more personal and contextual ways when on campus. Nailah, for example, spoke about how she often felt like her role as an ambassador is more prominent in spaces where her minority identities are more visible:

> I feel like I am the ambassador within my major… as a girl and an Egyptian or Arab or Middle Eastern, I feel like I stand out big time. So my impact is not as official, but to prove my profile can be in this field, I am proud of that.

> However, it was not just that the participants saw themselves as representatives of the Middle East, in many ways they came to this belief in response to their domestic peers treating them as such. Mustafa made this clear when he stated, in no uncertain terms, that "people take us as representatives of our region." Kubra explained that this awareness is not something that most Middle Eastern students even think about, because it becomes such a normal part of their everyday life. In answering questions or responding to stereotypes about the Middle East, Kubra is highly aware that her response will often be taken as representing not just herself, but the entire Middle East: "When I answer that question (any question about the Middle East), I recognize they are thinking of a lot of other Middle Easterners, so I try to be representative."

Kubra's perspective reflects a common consciousness among the participants that they represent much more than themselves while on campus.

Perhaps the most elucidating example of how the participants experienced being a representative of the Middle East is Malik's experience from his freshman year. In introducing this story, Malik mentioned how situations like this were "surprising at first, I guess, but happen so much it has just become normal."

> The first time people saw me [at UCLA] and they learned I speak fluent English they were like, "You grew up in Saudi? Wow!" and they change their minds. This was like my entire freshman year dorm. Like they saw my name, so they literally thought… I mean my name is "Malik", so [they thought] I am predominantly Middle Eastern, I probably didn't speak a word of English, they thought they wouldn't know how to interact… and I came and they were like "what?!" So that was the biggest time I changed people's perspectives… But the dorm room was really the first time I realized this and that I really realized I changed people's minds. Like my roommate was very shocked by me and he told me that he had no clue what to expect. All he thought was "a guy named Malik was coming from the Middle East and he didn't provide an email address." So they had no idea, but then I came and I had fluent English and we went out together and everything. So that was even the same case for my entire floor. And I've now seen them tell other people, when they meet other people they are like "oh my roommate is Lebanese" and it's a point of connection.

In telling this story Malik was illuminating how his presence on campus, and in the dorms in particular, had made an impact on the domestic students around him by countering stereotypes about what it meant to be from the Middle East. While this scenario proved to be extremely common among the participants, widespread negative or ignorant views of the Middle East often forced the participants to do more than simply represent the Middle East. Abdel described interactions with domestic students in which he felt he was "educating" them about the Middle East:

> The interaction is interesting. You do feel like you are educating them... [however] the world is so connected these days, so you can learn many things online and in a place like LA you meet a lot of different people… But when I do feel like I am educating people, it is interesting… it's like giving them information they wouldn't have otherwise.

Kubra expanded upon this sentiment by explaining how she was very aware that she was a source of information for domestic students:

> I think they [domestic students] are very interested in religion. Like "four wives, what is that"? Or "is it true Arabs don't like Americans?" Even if it is about something like Afghanistan, which I know little about, they will ask me, "you know right?" So I feel like I am the first source of info.

Throughout the interviews, it was clear that nearly all the participants felt a type of spokesman pressure that resulted from domestic students generalizing their views or actions onto the entire Middle East. Yet, despite this general belief, two interviewees, Noor and Ali, communicated that they did not necessarily see themselves as representatives or actively opposed the notion. While Noor viewed herself as a person who had information she could share with others, she was not fully comfortable with thinking of herself as a representative.

> In some ways when they [domestic students] have questions or things they have heard, they come to me. Sometimes I know and sometimes I won't. But I don't really see myself as a representative, but I don't know…

She went on to explain that she does not see herself as a representative of her country because she knows she might be deviating from what the culture might actually be, and in those times, she does not feel comfortable thinking of herself as a representative:

> I do some things right and then there are things I don't do right and I don't want to represent my country that already doesn't look good in so many peoples' eyes and then do things that aren't great and then have people be like "oh this is what Persians do," and like "no, this is what I do, this is how I live my life," ya know?

Expanding on her perspective, it became clear that Noor's hesitation with the label of representative came from a belief that no person could fully represent an entire region or country. In fact, she could identify many instances of influencing her peers and was aware that many domestic students did indeed view her as a representative of the Middle East.

For Ali, he had similar views on what it meant to be a representative and was critical of anyone who claimed to be a representative of a certain place. Although he spoke about how his interest in Persian film may provide perspective and new information to his classmates about Persian culture, he was quite adamant in his opposition to the notion of being a representative of the Middle East and mentioned explicitly that, "I don't think I have special authority to speak about Iran just because I am from that country. There are people not from Iran that know more than I do... or have more experience in Iran than I do." Though Ali was firm in his conviction that international students are not and should not be seen as representatives of their home countries, he also seemed to be aware of the fact that he, and other participants, *were* often mistaken as such: "I think it is problematic if people here [in the US] think that those people are representative of that country and I think most people think that they are representatives of that place." Here, Ali is articulating an important critique of citizen diplomacy, that indeed, seeing an individual as a representation of an entire place or culture can lead to further stereotyping and misunderstanding. However, his insistence of not being a representative was more a result of his own perceived identity than it was a response to how he saw others viewing him. Despite Ali and Noor being uncomfortable with the role of a representative, they did both provide examples of times in which they acted, whether intentionally or not, as representatives of the Middle East.

Ways of Contributing to Internationalization

In analyzing the ways in which the participants contributed to the humanistic goals of internationalization, I discovered two distinct forms of citizen diplomacy taking place. The first is passive citizen diplomacy, which is what much of the literature refers to when they call international students "cultural resources" and is defined by the presence of international

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students on campus rather than particular actions of the students. This type of citizen diplomacy often results from having a diverse population of students on campus and is therefore much easier to realize. In fact, it pays little attention to the characteristics, experiences, or identities of individual students (Larsen, 2016). Passive citizen diplomacy is the type of representation that Ali eluded to while acknowledging how he might represent the Middle East to some people but that he didn't do anything to actively play such a role. The second form of citizen diplomacy is active citizen diplomacy, which is defined less by the environment (i.e. a diverse campus) and more by the actions and identities of individual students. Moments of active citizen diplomacy are those in which the participants made an active decision to engage, educate, or represent while on campus. Active citizen diplomacy is therefore much more challenging as it requires a certain amount of energy and intentionality, however, it is also a much richer form of diplomacy.

While all the participants were aware of their connection to a type of citizen diplomacy on campus (even if they were uncomfortable with it), there were numerous different examples of how and when instances of citizen diplomacy arose. Yet, the literature on international students has done so little to analyze the nuanced and distinct ways in which international students contribute to internationalization (Larsen, 2016). While active and passive citizen diplomacy operate very differently and require different forms of university support, the distinction is not often recognized in the context of international students and their influence on campuses (Larsen, 2016). Therefore drawing out such a distinction is of particular significance because it sheds light on the nuanced ways in which international students contribute to internationalization and works against the conception of them as solely passive resources rather than active contributors to internationalization (Urban & Palmer, 2014).

Passive Citizen Diplomacy

I use the term passive citizen diplomacy to refer to the humanistic benefits that result from the presence of diverse and international students on campus. Passive citizen diplomacy is impacted little by the characteristics, experiences, or identities of international students as it depends more upon an environment in which all students are exposed to diversity regardless of their level of engagement with it (Larsen, 2016). Passive citizen diplomacy is a shallow form of diplomacy as it relies on visual cues and assumptions made from seeing diversity but not necessarily interacting with it. Passive citizen diplomacy is what Ali eluded to when he acknowledged how he might represent the Middle East to some people but was also clear that he would never try to do so. Importantly, passive citizen diplomacy does not imply that international students have no agency within it, rather the term highlights the often unintentional or natural ways in which this type of citizen diplomacy takes place.

Consistent with the passive image of international students reflected in much of the literature and university approaches to internationalization (Urban & Palmer, 2014), the participants in this study recognized and explained various instances in which they contributed to an improved image and understanding of their home countries and regions without much or any intentional effort expended. The participants spoke about instances of citizen diplomacy in which they did not try nor attempt to represent their home countries, but simply by being themselves, domestic students assumed their beliefs, experiences, or characteristics were generalizable to the entirety of the Middle East. In talking about ways in which she engaged in passive forms of citizen diplomacy, Sadira explained her influence by noting that she did not "feel obligated" to try to be anything other than herself, however, in being herself she was still indirectly providing a message to those around her:

I do not say anything different, just act naturally. I know the ideas that many people (Americans) have, but I think I am naturally a representation of all Syrians and Middle Easterners, just because who I am, so I am going to just act my own way.

Suggesting that the participants' representation is often innate rather than intentional, Sadira is making a direct reference to a passive form of diplomacy. Hakim picked up on why domestic students likely see the participants as representatives by pointing to how little knowledge Americans tend to have about the Middle East and its culture:

I mean I am not trying to represent my country, I just act the way I do… Most of the people I have interacted with do not have an understanding of Persian culture, so I just try to behave normally.

Behaving normally may seem like an abstract concept, but the participants provided many examples to illustrate this point. One example of a situation that came up repeatedly was introductions with new acquaintances. By answering what most people would presume to be normal questions among new acquaintances, the participants were often unintentionally challenging stereotypes and dominant narratives. Malik and Kubra explained two such scenarios:

Malik: When I say [I am] Saudi, people ask "how was it growing up there?" I say it was great and they are surprised because they think it must be strict and all these things. I think they are usually disappointed with my answers… I went to international school and did all these things, so they are surprised because it didn't meet their expectations.

Kubra: They'll [domestic students] ask where I am from and I say Dubai and we keep talking… and then the conversation comes back to, "so Dubai, what is it like there, can you do this or that?" But before I explain what Dubai is like, a lot of people have assumptions about what it is like where I am from.

In reflecting on these scenarios, the participants were well aware of the larger implications of everyday interactions. When they engaged in conversations with domestic students their replies to ordinary questions often did more than simply explain who they were, but served to challenge stereotypes or expectations that people had about the Middle East. However, in the moment, acts of passive citizen diplomacy often went unacknowledged by both participants in the interaction.

While the participants did not necessarily think consciously in every situation about how they were representing themselves, and therefore the Middle East, it was something that most had become more aware of since coming to UCLA. For some, the recognition was salient in almost everything they did, but for others, it was in certain spaces and interactions that they would be reminded of this role that they played. For example, Heidi spoke about how she felt her representation was more when she was in certain classes that increased the relevance of her Middle Eastern identity: "We (my friend and I) are Egyptians in a Jewish Studies class and I feel like we are showing people that we can be interested in other things. So these little details, even in our classes or in the activities we do, it is telling about how we are diverse." Heidi's reflection here is an important lesson in understanding the experiences and contributions of passive citizen diplomacy amongst the participants. In taking a Jewish Studies class simply because it interested her, she was simultaneously communicating something about Middle Eastern culture to those around her. Even when wanting to only speak for themselves, the participants were aware that such a luxury was not often afforded to them as Middle Eastern students in America.

For many of the participants, they emphasized that although they saw themselves as representatives (and believed that other students did as well) they did not find it difficult to represent a positive image of the Middle East because they already saw themselves as good people and students. To this point, Ahmed explained how being a good representative isn't something that necessarily requires a lot of effort on his part:

> For me it wasn't a hard thing to do kind of. Like I am not like a troublemaker kind of guy or you know like the wild person who does all kinds of crazy stuff and who needs to tone it down a little bit to kind of conform to that responsibility. I feel like my personality just naturally kind of conforms to it. You know? So in that sense yeah I feel the responsibility but it's not like something that I need to work extra hard at doing. You know it just kind of comes naturally to me.

As the top public university in the country (US News and World Report, 2020), the bar for acceptance to UCLA is high, which might help to explain why many of the participants saw their normal personality (i.e. high-achieving) as already being beneficial to the goals of internationalization. It would also then help to explain why the participants all pointed to various examples of passive citizen diplomacy as a positive influence they have had on campus. Whether it be through sharing where they were from when talking with new acquaintances, taking a diverse course load based upon their interests, or just being themselves in front of others, in reflection the participants all recognized the influence they could and did have on their domestic peers. This influence is perhaps best illustrated by the words of Asim when he explained how by just being himself at UCLA he had participated in passive citizen diplomacy, which has had a profound impact on the image of the Middle East in the eyes of his domestic peers.

> Naturally when they see something happening in the Arab world or Middle East they want to connect it to like a familiar face or a familiar event that they are interacted with and seen and know more about. And I think in a way that's a good thing because like having a friend like me it kind of… dispels some of the negative notions and the perceptions that are promoted through American media coverage of Middle Eastern events sometimes. And so they understand that, "no there are also normal people like my friend Asim who just want to succeed and do good in the world."

As these examples demonstrate, passive citizen diplomacy was participated in by all the participants. Such a finding suggests that universities may not be entirely misguided in taking the benefits of this type of citizen diplomacy for granted. However, there was another form of diplomacy taking place on campus that cannot be assumed to be automatic: active citizen diplomacy.

Active Citizen Diplomacy

While the participants all pointed to instances of passive citizen diplomacy as part of their contributions to internationalization, their contributions did not stop there. Active citizen

diplomacy is defined as the moments, interactions, and engagements where international students make intentional decisions or go out of their way to ensure that their perspectives are heard or the presence is felt on campus. It is a form of citizen diplomacy that is defined less by the participants' presence on campus and more by the intentional actions and choices they take to improve international and intercultural understanding.

Having become familiar with the dangers of reinforcing stereotypes while on campus, the participants often made conscious efforts to demonstrate the opposite through their interactions and engagements on campus. In particular, the students expressed motivation to take on an active role in citizen diplomacy when they saw a) the Middle East was being misrepresented in a negative or biased manner or b) a lack of Middle Eastern perspective or diversity being presented. The remainder of this section will provide examples of how many of the participants actively and consciously engaged in citizen diplomacy with the specific intent of improving domestic students' views and stereotypes of the Middle East.

All the participants had encountered situations on campus in which they were exposed to stereotypes, false media narratives, and ignorant statements being made about the Middle East. In these moments, the vast majority of participants expressed a desire, and even a need, to add their voice or their perspective to the situation. Nailah expressed her frustration about how the media's portrayal of the Middle East impacts how people view not only the Middle East, but also her, and how that motivates her to speak up: "It's kind of frustrating knowing that people have the wrong perception of who you are, and you get misinformation in media… so explaining that to them helps just clarify things." In such moments, Nailah is choosing to actively engage with her peers, whereas if the topic of conversation were different, she would likely not feel the same compulsion to make her voice heard. Even Noor, who was not fully comfortable with thinking of

herself as a representative, could recall times when her Middle Eastern identity motivated her to

speak up in certain situations:

> When people ask specific questions I will feel the need to correct it. Because when those things happen in the Middle East… many people don't know about it cause it is not on TV or something, [so] I will share my thoughts cause they might not be able to get it somewhere else.

The feeling of wanting to correct misconceptions or negative portrayals of the Middle East was

so strong among many of the participants that it led them to actively speak on behalf of their

home region, and for some, they did so even when not fully agreeing with what they were

saying. As Betül explained:

> When I go back home I just complain about my country, like "why!" but when I come here and have to talk to a friend or anyone, I have to defend my country whatever it is… like "yeah it sucks… but it is like this or that," I have to highlight the positive things, even if I don't have really positive opinions myself.

Understanding the negative portrayals of her home country and region, Betül was very open

about how she tries to always represent Turkey in a positive light because she feels the need to

push back against misconceptions. For Betül, this was a conscious effort that she would make

because the alternative, staying silent, would be more damaging.

Elaborating on Betül's insights, Taamir spoke further about how he felt the need to speak

about not just his own experience, but to represent the Middle East in general, even at times

when he may not have fully known the answer to specific questions or topics.

> When I came here I felt like I wasn't just Iranian or Azeri, I feel like now it is better for me to say stuff here and there about Middle Eastern culture to improve how people are living here, [and] the things they think. Maybe it is not such a bad thing to say something about something I might not 100% know about.

Because Taamir was aware of how his identity had shifted in the US, he made a conscious effort

to use the authority that comes with that identity to counter negative imagery and narratives of

the Middle East, even when it applied to topics beyond his knowledge. This commitment to

provide counterexamples or perspectives was also evident in Orhan's interview, as he provided a

detailed account of how he makes an effort to try and improve people's views of the Middle

East. In this particular example he is referring to specific groups of Jewish people that he saw as

having uniquely negative views of the region, however, knowing that Americans generally have

a negative view of the Middle East, his sentiment was something that many of the participants

shared.

> There are some groups that really don't like us. Some Arabs reinforce the stereotype about themselves but then people see that and it reinforces the group stereotype and people are just like "I knew it!" I make an effort to be polite… I try to be extra nice.

Throughout his interview, Orhan spoke very directly about how he saw the Middle East

characterized at UCLA and the ways in which he navigates a space where his identity is often

viewed in a certain light. In this instance, he made clear that it was his awareness of these

stereotypes and negative connotations that motivated him to play an active role in countering

them. While he may have always strived to be a polite person, the hyper-awareness of how his

actions were of consequence beyond himself helps to elucidate the unique nature of being a

Middle Eastern international student on an American campus. Orhan's acute awareness of the

importance of his interactions with others was reflected by Ahmed, who spoke about how he

makes a concerted effort when it comes to talking about topics related to the Middle East:

> During that conversation, because you're actually talking to that person, you know you need to put a little bit of effort into that discussion. That's where it really kicks in. I'm like OK I need to be like fully engaged with this person because this is one of the things that really matters. So like I embrace them completely. I'm actually very happy when I see someone like interested in learning more about it [the Middle East].

While active forms of citizen diplomacy were often motivated by a desire to correct a

misconception or a negative narrative about the Middle East, typically propagated by the media,

there was not a singular place in which such activities took place. However, one common place

the participants pointed to for active citizen diplomacy was in the classroom. Sara explained one such example:

> I have had interactions where people talk bad about my government, and I would speak up because people believe what they hear on the media. So I would raise my hand in classes and speak up and stuff, so people would look at me like "oh you are that loud Syrian girl."

Sara's experience supports the findings of previous scholars who have demonstrated the importance of the classroom as a vital place for information and perspective sharing to take place between international and domestic students (Cruickshank et al., 2012). Interactive classrooms, if facilitated properly, can allow for different opinions to be heard and for students to engage in different ideas and ways of thinking. It is also important to take full account of Sara's feelings of being seen as a "loud Syrian girl." Her words here problematize the assumption that international students will just automatically engage in active citizen diplomacy by illuminating the very real consequences and barriers that exist. In studying Asian international students in New Zealand, Jacqui Campbell and Mingsheng Li (2008) have found that while classrooms can be a space for sharing, it can also be very intimidating and vulnerable for international students to voice their opinions in classroom settings. The fact that Sara felt compelled to speak up, despite believing she'd be negatively labeled for it, highlights the commitment so many of the participants felt to be a positive ambassador of the Middle East. Indeed, Sara was not the only person to describe situations like this in the classroom. Nailah also recalled instances when she spoke up because she felt an obligation to provide her input as someone who had first-hand knowledge of the Middle East:

> It was my sociology class, he [the teacher] wasn't saying anything against like the Middle East, but it was just that he was talking about it and I felt like I needed to clarify. I don't remember exactly what we were talking about but he was asking for opinions and like I remember I spoke up.

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At times, even when the Middle East was not being described through a negative lens, the participants still felt the need to add to the conversation in order to ensure the perspective of the Middle East was included.

Speaking out was not the only way in which the participants described playing an active role in citizen diplomacy or representing their home region and countries. Betül explained how there were times when she may not feel like adding anything to a discussion, but still felt the need to ensure that people did not overlook the Middle East and its unique perspective. She described a time in which her class was watching a documentary about the Armenian genocide and she was compelled to make sure the other students knew that a Turkish person was present:

> Because I felt like I was representing… or like I was the informal diplomat in this country. So even when we were watching this documentary about the Armenian genocide, I felt like I had to do these body movements and like draw attention from people… just to say that I am here as a Turkish people and I am watching this, and I see it.

Betül's motivation for making herself seen, as a Turkish person, comes from a desire to demonstrate to her classmates that there is more than one side to any narrative. So without using any words, she felt that she was still doing her part to represent Turkey by making others notice her presence in the room. Betül explained other non-verbal forms of citizen diplomacy that she took part in for the purpose of making Turkey more visible to her domestic peers such as putting a Turkish flag on her backpack and wearing a necklace with a Tree of Life on it. She did these things specifically to signal to her domestic peers that she was Turkish and hoped that by doing so she might invite further conversation about the her country and culture.

Betül's hope to ignite conversation with her peers was one example, of many, of active citizen diplomacy that took place in more casual situations, not just in the classroom. Nailah

provided another example by describing times when she would be sure to speak up to ensure the

Middle East was represented correctly:

> When I'm out with friends and they're like saying things about the Middle East that used to be in the past, but now it's not… like I do try to clarify that for them and be like no that's not the same now, we're not like that, you know what I mean?

Nailah's example demonstrates not just that active citizen diplomacy often takes place in non-

facilitated environments but underscores the importance of interaction between international and

domestic students. Moreover, for some of the participants, their influence was not limited solely

to their close friends or classmates, but instead, they made their own opportunities to share their

culture and perspectives with a wider audience. For instance, Emine who was the Turkish

ambassador for the school's International Student Ambassadors program,[8] explained how pride

in her country motivated her to share her culture with students around her:

> I've realized I am very proud of my culture and I like sharing it with people. For many Americans they don't know anything about Turkey, so it is a blank page, so I like teaching them about it and sharing coffee or tea and inviting them to come over to learn about Turkey.

Emine's sentiments here were widely held by the other participants in the study. Many of them

expressed a similar perspective: American students don't know very much about my country or

region (or they only know negative things), I feel I can represent it well, so I will make every

effort to, as Kubra put it, "always put my best foot forward." Though all international students

may feel a similar desire to represent their countries and cultures positively, the participants all

agreed that because of the negative image of the Middle East, their situation was, in some ways,

unique. As Kubra put it:

> A person coming from France, I don't think they would feel the same urge to be super nice and put their best foot forward, because I do… it is weird to say, but I think people

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[8] A program run through the Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars that appoints international students to be ambassadors who act as a point of contact for other students or individuals from that country looking for connection or support.

do see French people as having different characteristics and unique things, and they are diverse. But with Arabs, because there is so little they know about us, they [domestic students] do have a tendency to generalize, so if they are going to generalize, generalize positively.

In sum, the difference in the active forms of citizen diplomacy comes largely down to intention: the participants approached their engagements and interactions on campus with a conscious intention to be positive influences and representatives of the Middle East. However it is important to note that not all participants engaged in active citizen diplomacy on the same scale. What emerged in analyzing the data was that those participants who were less likely or enthusiastic to see themselves as representatives, were also less likely to engage in forms of active citizen diplomacy. Ali, who was the only participant to actively reject the idea of being a representative of the Middle East, exerted no effort in trying to engage in any form of citizen diplomacy. This suggests the rather obvious conclusion that when students are more aware or accepting of their role in citizen diplomacy, they are more likely to be intentional in seeking out ways to play such a role effectively.

Burden vs. Responsibility: Responses to Citizen Diplomacy

In analyzing how people respond when faced with stereotype threats, such as spokesperson pressure, Block et al. (2011) provide a useful model that defines three main categories: fending off the stereotype, discouraged by the stereotype, and resilient to the stereotype. *Fending off the stereotype* is defined by individuals who "work vigorously to demonstrate that the stereotype does not apply to them. They may use work strategies, such as striving to perform at a high level, to appear perfect and demonstrate a 'bulletproof' image'." *Discouraged by the stereotype* is defined by "individuals who respond to stereotype threat with discouragement realize that no matter how productive they are, and how much they achieve, they

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will still be perceived in light of this stereotype—not in every situation, but unpredictably. Anger is a typical emotional response in this stage." Lastly, *resiliency to the stereotype,* though substantially less researched, is defined by "individuals who respond to stereotype threat with resilience strategies realize that stereotype threat will be present and will affect how others judge them. Therefore, they redirect their energy toward the goal of changing the context of their work environment, with the incentive that it will be more inclusive for members of their identity group." This model provides a helpful starting point to analyze the perspectives of Middle Eastern international students at UCLA and their responses to citizen diplomacy.

In analyzing the participants' interviews, two clear themes emerged in terms of what the participants' responses were to becoming citizen diplomats (i.e. ambassadors, representatives) of the Middle East. While not mutually exclusive, the participants' views on this subject made clear that even though being a citizen diplomat could be a tremendous burden, it was much more so an incredible responsibility and opportunity. This emphasis on responsibility and opportunity is a central factor in differentiating the concept of citizen diplomacy from that of stereotype threat, and it is why for the case of this study, citizen diplomacy more closely aligns with the experiences of the participants. This distinction is supported by Steele's (1990) theory that a critical factor in the toxicity of stereotype threat is "a lifetime of exposure to society's negative images of their ability." For international students, they have only recently been confronted with such stereotypes and discrimination, which may explain their more optimistic assessments. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the participants did not feel varying levels of negativity while on campus and it is important that those feelings and perspectives also be brought to light. Therefore, in the following section I highlight two emergent themes, burden and

responsibility/opportunity, that explain how the participants responded to the realities of being a representative of the Middle East and engaging in citizen diplomacy.

Burden

  Consistent with the literature of stereotype threat for minority American students, many of the participants in the study described their feeling of representing the Middle East as a type of burden that added pressure, discomfort, or annoyance to their experience at UCLA (Sue et al., 2008). Though all the participants, aside from Ali, saw immense value in the citizen diplomacy activities they were a part of, some also pointed to a burden that they felt as a result of the expectations of domestic students to be representative of the Middle East. But even amongst those who felt a burden to represent the Middle East, there were differences in how they experienced this pressure. While some participants saw the burden placed upon them as unfair or a negative part of their experience, others had a much more sanguine perspective on the burdens of being a representative. This section will explore both.

  One example of a more optimistic perspective on the burdens of representing the Middle East came from Asim who saw the impact of this pressure as making him more conscientious rather than having a harmful effect on his well-being:

> I think they [domestic students] think of me in a way which is a burden to me, but I'm also a good person, so it's natural that I'm good to people. So it's also not [a burden]. But it makes me want to be conscious of what spaces I'm in, what kinds of things I want to say, I have to be sure that it reflects what I actually think and I'm not erratically saying things because people will listen to me and will think that's a common perception from where I'm from. So I just have to be extra careful of how I communicate my thoughts.

Amin's statement reflects a perspective that was present among several students; that while being a citizen diplomat came with expectations and pressures, they were expectations and pressures that could be fulfilled with little negative impact on their well-being or experiences at

UCLA. While these pressures did force Asim to be more "careful" in his interactions with others, he viewed it less as a burden than a simple reality of being a person in his position. Though this may not be an egregious burden, it is still a pressure that was disproportionally placed onto international students and from which domestic students are immune. Asim went on to say that he felt "pressure not to mess up," which is a burden that he takes with him wherever he goes on campus.

For other participants, the burden of representing the Middle East came largely from having to continually face stereotypes and negative views of the Middle East. As has been spoken about throughout this dissertation, the negative portrayals of Middle Eastern people in the media put the participants in a cultural space where they were extremely aware of their identity. In some cases, that awareness was a weight that they were forced to carry in a way that students from other areas of the world are largely excluded from. Iman explained his frustration with scenarios in which people would come to him with negative or stereotypical questions, such as, "do you support Hamas?"

> I mean you wouldn't interact with a British person like that.. like "what is your opinion on Brexit?" Like you at least need to get to know me before you start asking things like that. And with media which gives this orientalism view on the Middle East, like can't you think outside of that? Like is it logical that every person from the Middle East is out to kill a westerner? That is my frustration with people when they find out someone is from Palestine they just ask, "do you support Hamas?" It is like, "okay, I don't even know your name yet." You know?

Iman expressed a frustration that many of the participants experienced: the struggle to continue to represent the Middle East even in the face of what felt like relentless stereotyping and ignorance. The burden of being frequently seen as a Middle Easterner first and an individual second is something that many of the students spoke at length about. It meant that even when the participants might not want to act in a certain way, when they may want to speak in a less

diplomatic manner, they always had to be aware of how they were coming off and how it might be taken by those around them. Mustafa expressed this frustration when speaking about how it makes him feel when domestic students ask him ignorant or uneducated questions:

> The first couple times you feel anger, and then just frustrated because it is an endemic problem. It is systematic – like what can you do when so many people think that and ask you? So you just do the best you can to change it.

Like Mustafa, many of the participants saw prejudice as a systemic problem in the US, bolstered by the media, which in some ways allowed them to respond to ignorance or hostility with an element of understanding. However, understanding why so many people might hold these views of the Middle East did not diminish the frustration or hurt that it could sometimes inflict. In response to these constant occurrences, Sadira noted that Middle Eastern students simply find ways to deal with them efficiently, so it becomes less of a burden. In her words, "You learn a set of answers that you can use to just kind of move on."

Similarly, Betül expressed her frustration with always having to explain her country and the Middle East to others, particularly when so much of what America knows about the region is negative.

> That kind of bothers me… like with the American priest in Turkey and the Khashoggi thing, I just feel like… I don't want to be the one to explain my country's politics and don't want to be associated with that. Like the Education Department is trying to remove evolution from textbooks and I don't really want people to think of me as coming from there.

Even though Betül believed that some things happening in her home country were wrong, she often felt like she had to walk a fine line between representing her country and distancing herself from the things she disagreed with. Kalie's approach to this balance was to always try to separate her views from that of the entire Middle East by saying things such as, "I feel this way…" and also, "People I know think this…"

Another burden that the participants faced in dealing with their identity and citizen diplomacy was that there were often consequences to actively representing or speaking as a Middle Eastern person. Sadira explained what it is like when international students contribute their perspectives in classroom settings:

> You have the same interactions in classrooms. Like if you are answering something from a different perspective because you don't agree with what is being said. So I will say like, "in other countries when people say this they actually mean that." So especially in the classroom when you say something everyone looks at you like, "oh you are different, you grew up in a different place, you have a different perspective," and you kinda just have to be like, yeah. So that burden is there.

As Sadira highlights, being a representative often comes with onerous consequences, such as being identified as different, othered, or simply being misunderstood. These consequences were often on the minds of the participants as they contemplated how forthcoming to be in actively embracing their influence as a Middle Eastern representative.

While citizen diplomacy was definitely seen as a burden by some of the participants, surprisingly the overwhelming majority of participants saw these experiences less as burdens and more as opportunities to improve what domestic students thought about the Middle East. In the following section, I explain how even though the participants faced various stereotype threats, they often responded to these with surprising optimism and incredible resiliency.

Responsibility and Opportunity

The pressure that comes from being a representative/ambassador of an entire region would be burdensome for any college student, so it was surprising to discover the extent to which the participants looked positively upon what otherwise might be seen as an onerous responsibility. While the participants all expressed their dismay and surprise at how little Americans know about the Middle East and how so few of them have interacted with people

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from the region, these also served as motivators for the participants. They saw the void of information surrounding the Middle East as a factor that could amplify their potential impact in improving Americans' understanding of the region. Ultimately, while some of the students did acknowledge the burden that was placed on them through citizen diplomacy expectations, nearly all of them exemplified a *resiliency to the stereotype* response (Block et al., 2011), as they saw their representation on campus as a responsibility and an opportunity to make a difference and improve intercultural and international understanding of the Middle East.

Even when speaking about the burdens that citizen diplomacy presented, the participants often communicated how such burdens were surpassed by the responsibility of being a citizen diplomat. Fatima eloquently summarized this sentiment when she spoke about how, despite believing it to be unfair to have such pressure put on her, she recognized that she was in a unique position to truly inform those around her; "in some ways I am not here to be your dictionary, but at the same time I am your dictionary." In Fatima's reflection, she expresses a competing set of feelings that many of participants also felt: feelings of burden versus feelings of responsibility. For Fatima, though she saw educating people about the Middle East as an unfair burden placed upon her, she fully accepted the fact that she was likely the best person available for the task, and for that reason, it was something she had a responsibility to accept.

The distinction between burden and responsibility was also contextual. The participants explained that there was a difference between interactions with domestic students that were led by sincerity and good intentions versus those driven by ignorance and hostility. Heidi explained this distinction while making clear that she saw citizen diplomacy as both burden *and* inherent responsibility:

> Personally, I am flattered that people are willing to change their perceptions of my people by asking me. [But not] if it is a question like, "do you behead non-Muslims?" like I had

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a guy ask me this one time in my math class and I was like "okay… no." But if someone is coming up to me with interest and wants to know and change their perception that they can't help but have, then it is a burden that no one signed up for but you are born with it. I am flattered and I respond, and then if they just keep their opinion I know it wasn't genuine.

A few things are important to highlight in Heidi's comment. The first is that although the participants felt varying levels of burden in certain situations, that burden was increased with interactions where domestic students were perceived to be less than genuine in their engagements. Second, Heidi, as well as the other participants, were quite forgiving of domestic students having negative views about the Middle East because they understood that the majority of their information was coming from the media. This understanding seemed to help the participants view interactions with domestic students as less of a burden and more as a responsibility or opportunity to expose them to a positive narrative. Awareness of the geo-political and cultural environment in which these 18-22 year old American college students were raised appeared to help the participants respond positively to their questions that were at times, dreadfully ignorant. Madiha explained this perspective in the following way:

When you are living in the West and there is a negative connotation about your country or culture, and you are the only resource someone has to understand your country or culture, because all they know is from media or the news, or they haven't heard anything, there is a responsibility to act as an ambassador to the country and culture, and I understand it is annoying sometimes, but if you are annoyed and not educating them then you can't be annoyed if you don't want to change that perspective.

Madiha's comments represent what was a common perspective of the participants. The belief that despite the unfairness or challenges that come with being a Middle Eastern student, being in the US presented an opportunity to change the negative images of the Middle East that each participant had a responsibility to undertake. Such a perspective exemplifies an incredible sense of pragmatism and resiliency. With an eye towards a future where Middle Eastern students are less burdened by such stereotypes, many of the participants took it upon themselves to dismantle

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them whenever possible. Mustafa enthusiastically emphasized this mindset when pointing out

that just because it wasn't the participants fault that they were burdened by the

pressures/stereotypes of being Middle Eastern, it did not mean that they didn't still have a

responsibility to make it better:

> I believe we are kind of diplomats, so we have to use some diplomacy. The people before us maybe didn't set a good ground to be seen well or treated well. And it is mostly our governments that did this... they didn't set a good example, didn't defend us, and we have to live with this, we have to try and make it different and represent people back home in a good way…to lay the ground for our kids.

Mustafa's powerful statement is testament to the incredible resiliency and pragmatism that the

participants embodied. Despite being faced with derogatory stereotypes, at times both implicit

and explicit, they were often able to see above it and look towards a larger purpose. In viewing

themselves as diplomats, they took on the responsibility to do their part to reimagine the image

of the Middle East in American culture (or at least in the eyes of their peers). As Kubra put it,

despite "implicit pressure to just do well," she still viewed her role in the US as a

"responsibility:"

> Maybe for some people I am the only Arab person they are ever going to know and maybe that will help to humanize a Syrian kid they see on TV. And so I definitely feel that responsibility to always put my best foot forward, smile, be really nice. I do feel that, yes.

Other participants saw absolutely no burden associated with citizen diplomacy. For these

participants, they spoke about instances of citizen diplomacy exclusively through the lens of

opportunity and responsibility. This perspective was grounded in positive experiences, where the

students' identities were a point of interest and relationship-building. As Malik explained, "It is

never a burden, usually just a good way to start a conversation… and it goes back and forth and

you learn about two places. But I see how it could be…" The "see how it could be" in Malik's

statement refers to situations in which the person you speak with is hurtful or aggressive in some

way. Thankfully, most of the participants had not had many outwardly discriminatory

interactions related to their identity on campus. The participants attributed this largely to being

on such a liberal campus, and therefore had a sense of how their experiences were probably more

positive than other students in different parts of the country.

For participants like Ahmed, citizen diplomacy was never seen as a burden because he

was confident that he was naturally a responsible representative of the Middle East. He

explained:

> I'm an ambassador of my country, of my people, my family… and I don't feel I don't
> think of it as a burden at all. But then again that's me; you know like this is coming from
> a person who is like you know very open to the world, who seeks to understand the world
> and like I tend to find myself doing the same thing to other people.

Abdel echoed Ahmed's perspective, emphasizing that he did not see citizen diplomacy as a

burden placed upon him, only a responsibility:

> Obviously we make a difference, and we have a responsibility to do so, but we just have
> to be our normal selves. We just be who we are and people can learn what the reality is.
> We don't have to go out of our way on a mass scale.

While the participants were very aware that the expectations of citizen diplomacy and the

burdens of stereotype threat were not something only felt by Middle Eastern students, they did

see their experiences as unique in many ways. For most of the participants, being Middle Eastern

was different than any other ethnicity due to the exceptionally negative beliefs that are so

ingrained into American culture and media (Eltantawy, 2013; Shaheen, 2009). As such, the

participants largely agreed that their role as representatives came with particularly significant

responsibilities. Kubra noted:

> Because we are so underrepresented here, if we don't speak up they won't know how it
> really is. There is only like 200 of us here, so we will be the only Middle Eastern people
> that others will know intimately, so I do feel a responsibility to speak up and tell the
> truth.

The fact that she may be the only Middle Eastern person that her acquaintances may ever interact

with in a meaningful way, created a feeling of responsibility that really resonated with all the

participants, especially Kubra:

> When I answer that question (a question relating to the Middle East), I recognize they are
> thinking of a lot of other Middle Easterners, so I try to be representative. So I try to say,
> "I think this way…", so I feel the need to make sure I am being accurate and not
> misrepresenting how other people in the Middle East are. I do feel that responsibility.

While Kubra did also note a certain pressure that this puts on her, her statement here

represented what many of the participants communicated; that their ability to influence and

represent the Middle East was, above all else, a responsibility derived from an opportunity. Some

participants, such as Ahmed, even took this notion of responsibility further to the point of seeing

it as a moral responsibility. In explaining how he viewed situations in which he was being asked

to represent the Middle East, he concluded:

> It is something I should do. It's something that is morally permissible… it is not morally
> required of me to justify these things, but it would be appreciated to clarify things for
> people. It's an educational opportunity for them and I think you spread knowledge when
> you use your voice and you're in a situation where you identify with a certain region, so
> you have that specialized knowledge. So it is not required but it would be appreciated and
> do good.

Ahmed's comment demonstrates the seriousness with which the participants viewed their role as

representatives. Not only was it a responsibility to use their identity as an opportunity to spread

knowledge, but it was also seen as morally the right thing to do. Without their voices, domestic

students may never be exposed to the perspective they can provide, and to not take advantage of

what was viewed as a lost opportunity to help improve international understanding on campus.

Overall, the dominant perspective among the participants was that even in times where

being a representative of the Middle East was a burden, the responsibility and opportunity

created by their presence at UCLA far outweighed those burdens or challenges. The extent to

which the participants had optimism towards citizen diplomacy appeared to stem from their understanding of both a) the overwhelmingly negative image of the Middle East and b) the potential significance of their influence on others. The data in this section reinforces the work of Urban and Palmer (2014) who found that international students are quite willing to be engaged as cultural resources for their domestic peers. However, these findings provide important context that help us to understand the mindset of international students and the processes through which they come to understand and either accept or reject the role of citizen diplomats. It also sheds light on the very real burdens that impact these international students, yet may be hidden beneath optimistic or pragmatic attitudes.

Conclusion

Having weaved our way through an analysis of the various perspectives and experiences that the participants of this study had with regards to their diplomatic presence on campus, what has been learned? Four key takeaways summarize this chapter's findings. First, throughout the course of analyzing the data, it was abundantly clear that the participants were universal in the recognition and awareness that they were often seen by their domestic counterparts as representing the Middle East as a type of unofficial ambassador or diplomat. Despite some participants, two in particular, voicing their reluctance to identify themselves as representatives, they all could identify situations and instances in which they either knowingly or unwittingly played such a role.

Second, in describing the ways in which they influenced the opinions or perspectives of other students on campus, the participants' actions broke down into two forms of citizen diplomacy: passive and active. All the participants explained situations in which they, without trying, represented the Middle East in the eyes of their domestic counterparts. From answering

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questions about where they were from, to dressing in a particular way, to simply interacting "normally," the participants were aware of the influence their passive actions were having on how others viewed not only them, but the Middle East. In addition, the participants also described instances that went beyond passive forms of representation and were characterized by an active intention to represent the Middle East. These actions were motivated largely by two important realities on campus: negative stereotypes and media representations, and ignorance about the Middle East. To combat these realities, the participants engaged in active citizen diplomacy including speaking up when they heard opinions of the Middle East that they disagreed with, raising their hands in class to contribute a Middle Eastern perspective, and purposefully attempting to counter Middle Eastern stereotypes by being especially friendly, happy, and congenial when interacting with others.

Third, despite being faced with the burdens of stereotype threat and spokesperson pressure, the participants largely viewed and responded to instances of citizen diplomacy through a lens of responsibility and opportunity. Demonstrating tremendous resiliency, courage, and pragmatism, the participants were quick to look beyond the forms of stereotyping and discrimination that they were confronted with and accept such challenges as opportunities to improve the image of the Middle East. With a void of information or affirmative narratives surrounding the Middle East, the majority of participants were well-aware of the influence they could have and therefore saw citizen diplomacy as an important responsibility.

Fourth, while the majority of participants saw themselves as citizen diplomats, there were clear differences in levels of citizen diplomacy that they engaged in. Those who were more readily aware of and embracing of their representative role on campus described more involvement in active forms of citizen diplomacy than did those who had thought less about their

role or had reservations about being seen as a representative. Additionally, those who saw citizen diplomacy as more of a burden tended to express less interest or effort in engaging in it. This difference strongly suggests that the full potential of citizen diplomacy is not being met if students are either unclear of how their actions and presence on campus contribute to the goals of internationalization or are faced with burdens that discourage their engagement on campus. The next chapter will address this and other barriers to effective citizen diplomacy.

CHAPTER 7: CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONALIZATION AND CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

When I correct someone who has their own perception of where I come from, if they then talk to someone who has that same conception, they will be like "no that's not right, I talked to this person and they said this."

Noor did not come to UCLA expecting to improve the image of the Middle East. In fact, Noor never even gave much thought about how being Middle Eastern would play a role in her experience on campus, after all, her motivation for leaving the UAE to come to UCLA was purely academic. So she was as surprised as anyone when she began to realize how her actions and interactions were influencing the opinions and perspectives of her peers. Her domestic peers seemed to readily bestow upon her a certain authority and expectation to speak on behalf of her home culture. After just two years on campus, Noor had become accustomed, though not entirely comfortable, with the role of Middle Eastern representative that was often placed upon her. It was also clear to her, that as a result of her presence on campus, at least some people now had a more positive view of the Middle East.

Of course, Noor didn't see herself as having some major, far-reaching influence on the world, after all, she wasn't a global icon. However, when she added up the daily interactions and engagements that she had with people on campus, the impact appeared to not be completely insignificant. For example, there have been countless times when she has corrected a misconception of one of her friends or provided her perspective on an issue related to the Middle East. Since she has a certain authority, coming from the Middle East, they often took seriously what she had to say, and as a result would become more educated about the region. But her impact did not end there. Often, she witnessed those same friends share their newly acquired knowledge with other people, effectively growing her sphere of influence. So, while she may

only interact with one person at a time, the ultimate influence of a single interaction was grown exponentially. It wasn't lost on her that if enough Middle Eastern students influenced enough American students, the results could change an entire culture's view of the Middle East.

Though she always made it a point to correct inaccuracies or misconceptions about the Middle East, educating people was not only one way in which Noor saw her diplomatic influence on campus. Perhaps even more importantly than being a source of information for her peers, she had the powerful ability to humanize the Middle East. In a country where so few people will ever go to the Middle East or experience the culture, she knew that finding a connection with it was almost impossible. But through her, domestic students on campus were given a personal connection to the region… they finally had a face to associate with the stories they heard on the news. Through their interactions with her, she knew she was both educating domestic students as well as humanizing her home. How did she know? She'd seen it firsthand.

Noor's insights shed light on a question that this dissertation has been building towards in the previous two chapters: what has been the outcome of the participants' citizen diplomacy and how does it relate to the goals of humanistic internationalization? This chapter will deal with these questions and provide answers, as articulated by the participants themselves. Instead of quantifying the outcome or impact that the participants have had on campus as previous research has done (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Gurin et al., 2002), the knowledge put forth in this chapter will help to illuminate how international students see and perceive of the impact they are having. Such knowledge, which is lacking in the field, is an important step forward in designing internationalization programs that are intentional, student-centered, and as a result, more effective. After all, if universities are tasking international students with being contributors to internationalization, then knowing the participants' assessment of their own impact is of vital

importance. Ultimately, whether the participants' views do or do not match up with the expectations of the university, the knowledge acquired is a first-step in improving internationalization efforts moving forward.

As has been established, the participants engaged in passive and active citizen diplomacy aimed largely at combating negative representations of the Middle East and American ignorance of the region. Motivated by these realities, the participants saw their contributions to internationalization fall broadly within one of three categories: providing international perspective and understanding, humanizing the Middle East, and creating opportunities for two-way diplomacy. Importantly, as the participants saw it, contributing to any of these categories had implications for both interpersonal and international relations. In fact, they were highly cognizant of the ways in which they were playing a role in improving understanding between the Middle East and the United States.

Outcome #1: Enhancing Perspective and Understanding of the Middle East

When speaking about how the participants viewed their impact on campus the theme that came up most often was that of enhancing domestic students' perspectives and understanding of the Middle East. The participants had acute awareness that their Middle Eastern identity gave them the ability and authority (in the eyes of many) to authentically represent a Middle Eastern perspective on campus. In fact, some scholars have even argued that international students "naturally present an image of legitimacy as they are removed from any immediate sense of mistrust or dislike that may be associated with a government" (Mathews-Aydinli, 2017). By doing so, the participants felt as though they were not only giving domestic students a perspective not previously available to them, but that they were in fact enhancing their

understanding of the Middle East. The participants often spoke about how sharing their perspective made domestic students aware of the diversity of experiences and viewpoints that exist outside of the US. As Betül put it, "I do feel like I am changing people's perspective. At least they know a little about where I am from and that my country exists, that this diversity exists." For Betül, her influence on students around her was not solely defined by changing perspectives, but by enlarging their view of the world through exposure to cultures, narratives, and knowledge that were different from their own. In emphasizing that for domestic students it "is very important to hear opinions that are not just on the news," Noor provided a concise explanation of how she saw the influence of international students, including herself, on the UCLA campus:

> I am sure that every student who is on this campus has brought a part of their culture, tradition or beliefs that has changed someone's conception… and that is a positive influence. Like you can't really understand something that you haven't lived through it, you know what I mean? You learn from your experiences. If you haven't lived through something you can't say what it is like, so you depend on other people's experiences and what they have lived through and base your thoughts and opinions on that.

Noor's comment is wonderfully insightful in its appreciation of the role that international students play in filling gaps in domestic students' experiences that often hinder their ability to understand or be aware of other cultures or regions of the world. Interestingly, this is a topic of particular concern for the US as surveys have indicated a strikingly low rate of global literacy among American, college-aged students (Council on Foreign Relations and National Geographic Society, 2016).

Across the world, difficulty seeing beyond one's own perspective is a deficit that every human is plagued by, which underscores the vitally important role that international students can play on US campuses and in the world. A story that Jana shared is a textbook example of how

international students increase cultural understanding by pushing domestic students to, in her words "look into things more:"

> Back home it is very normal to have a driver and a maid. Here it is a social class thing… but even the middle class have them because labor is so much cheaper [in Jordan]. So I don't know how the conversation got to that point, but we were talking; me, an Arab friend, and two American guys. And we said "our maid" or something and they were like "oh you must be so rich." And we were like no that is not how it is… that is just the culture. But because of how it is viewed here, it is viewed as much more special. So I feel like from that… even if it is a dumb conversation, it makes you view things different and you realize that just because it is viewed like that here, it is not viewed that way somewhere else.

Jana's story provides a useful illustration for how the participants felt they were contributing to the internationalization efforts of campus. Through sharing their stories, experiences, and cultures, they were broadening the knowledge of domestic students and expanding their perspectives on both the Middle East and the world more broadly. This impact is consistent with the research on international students that demonstrates the very real influence they can have on expanding the cultural understanding of domestic students (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Gareis, 2012; Gurin et al., 2002).

Outcome #2: Humanizing the Middle East

Ibrahim Nawar (2007), Chief Executive of Arab Press Freedom Watch, has argued that:

Mental stereotyping is very dangerous, especially when it is based on narrow-minded ideas and false data. Mental stereotyping of Arabs in the Western media includes features of anti-Western attitudes, extremism and terrorism. Such stereotyping can only promote hate talk and conflict rather than tolerance and respect for others. (p. 98)

Confronted with the type of mental stereotyping that Nawar describes, the participants found that domestic students often shed their stereotypes, to varying degrees, when they were able to interact or engage with them. This observation is consistent with research that has demonstrated how stereotypes are amplified and perpetuated when there is a lack of opportunity for those

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stereotypes to be broken down or replaced (Seltzer, 1977). Accordingly, the participants saw their interactions on campus as opportunities in which they were able to break down dehumanizing stereotypes of the Middle East by providing domestic students with a personal, human connection to the region.

They spoke about their contributions to breaking down stereotypes as a way of "normalizing" or "humanizing" the Middle East to their American peers. As the participants saw it, they were able to humanize the Middle East by showing their domestic classmates that people from the Middle East are normal people, with similar goals, desires, and values as the ones they hold. To humanize the Middle East was to help move Americans away from the ingrained images of a violent, evil, and backwards Middle East and towards an image of the Middle East as a place where normal people live and where life, though culturally different, moves in a manner not so distinct from that of life in the US.

In speaking to the humanizing benefits of citizen diplomacy, Madiha felt like "just having the opportunity to be here, gives people the realization that we are similar people. We go through struggles, but we go through the same things they go through, so it normalizes us." The importance of this cannot be understated as so much of the difficulties that exist between the Middle East and the Unites States are based upon dehumanizing narratives that paint the other side as bad or evil (Bruneau & Kteily, 2017). So while Madiha had to deal with knowing people had certain stereotypes about her, she also felt confident that she could replace that image with a real, more human one: herself. Betül spoke insightfully about how this process takes place:

> I think in general when you meet someone different than you… like when you interact with someone, you get away from the image you have in your mind. And if that person just becomes another person, you lose that stereotype in your head.

As a result of the participants' interactions and engagements with their domestic peers, the

participants felt strongly that they were demonstratively improving (i.e. humanizing) the Middle

East on campus and breaking down dehumanizing stereotypes.

Highlighting the importance of international and domestic students living and interacting

together, Ahmed was confident in the humanizing influence Middle Eastern students on campus:

> There is no doubt about it. You know every person can make a change even if it is small.
> Because especially at a university it's like a marketplace of ideas. You know it's a place
> where you can argue or you can talk to people, you can mingle... you have people from
> all walks of life who are in this place for four years. They go out together, they do sports
> together, they live in the dorms together, even through a simple conversation. If I got to
> speak to all the Middle Eastern students or Arab or Muslim students, I would tell them to
> be more open, just talk to people, show your true colors. Because not everyone can be
> painted with the same brush you know just because you have like this group of extremists
> that doesn't mean that every single Muslim person is an extremist.

Ahmed's statement emphasizes the important role that the participants play by interacting and

engaging with their domestic peers. By sharing in normal experiences and activities, stereotyped

images of the Middle East are replaced by images of the Middle East represented by their

international student peers. Ultimately, the participants' presence on campus not only allowed for

the breaking down of Middle Eastern stereotypes, but the humanizing of the region by giving

domestic students a representation of the Middle East that they can relate to and interact with

through their international peers.

Outcome #3: Two-Way Diplomacy

When thinking of the impact that international students have it is important to remember

that all relationships, by definition, consist of more than one actor or participant. While the

perceived impact that the participants had on their domestic peers was significant, the

participants were abundantly clear that the benefits of citizen diplomacy did not stop there. In

fact, one of the major contributions that the participants saw in their presence and engagements on campus was not just how they helped others to better understand the Middle East, but how they in turn were able to develop a more appreciative understanding of the United States and the world. I've coded this as "two-way diplomacy" because it highlights the inherently relational nature of citizen diplomacy and internationalization.

For many of the participants, the knowledge they have gained in the US has allowed them to push back against false stereotypes that they encounter when they go back to their home countries. For example, Malik explained that "people at home will ask, 'are people racist there [in the US]?' And I am like no, not everyone is racist." Not only has Malik's experience in the US given him knowledge about the US, but it has equipped him with the authority to speak about the US to his friends back home in the same manner that his being Middle Eastern provided him a similar opportunity in the United States. As Malik summarized, "I tell people in the Middle East about people in the United States… and I tell people here about the Middle East." Malik's comments encapsulate the two-way nature that defines effective citizen diplomacy. The fact that his experience in the US did not just influence the views that Americans have of the Middle East, but vice versa, is a reality that cannot be forgotten when designing internationalization initiatives. The importance of this dynamic is simple to grasp by contemplating how Malik's response to his friends back home might have been different had his experience at UCLA been of a more negative persuasion.

Jana was also very aware of the mutual influence that took place between domestic and international students. Speaking about cultural peculiarities and norms, Jana observed that citizen diplomacy was not just about US students learning about the Middle East, but about both sides learning from each other:

> We all assume that what is okay in our society is the same everywhere. And it is everywhere. Like I know Arabs that come here and say, "why are things like that here?" So it goes both ways.

Building on this theme, Taamir reflected on how Middle Eastern students at UCLA don't just develop a better understanding of America, but also of other Middle Eastern countries:

> I feel like it also changes us as individuals. We come here and talk with each other and we learn about each other. If I had stayed in Iran I would have had a different view of my Middle East neighbors, so I have developed my perspective, and then when I get into the world that could help things.

Taamir's observation also applied to his views of the United States as he also spoke at length about the ways in which being on campus had changed his image of the United States, both in positive, and sometimes negative, ways.

Regardless of the specific application, two-way diplomacy was a dominant theme for the participants as they reflected on the impact of their time on campus. Whether it be by improving the US image in their home countries or expanding their own global perspectives, a central perceived outcome of citizen diplomacy on campus was that the benefits were often, if not always, mutual.

The Multiplier Effect: Implications for International Relations

While the participants were readily able to identify what they saw as localized or individual (person-to-person) benefits that they were contributing to the university, they also saw a more global impact. In fact, the participants described in strikingly similar terms what they saw as the global contributions of their citizen diplomacy engagement. Though the participants did not use Mathews-Aydinli's (2017) exact language, how they articulated the importance of their time at UCLA largely reflected her assertion:

If enough people in two populations are fortunate enough to gain greater intercultural understanding of the other group, or if individuals in critical political, bureaucratic or social positions from each group increase their intercultural awareness, it may reduce the likelihood of clashes between those two groups. (p. 3)

As Taamir observed, "The stories we share with our classmates or colleagues are small, but I think when you think of all of us, talking to different people, those things add up and can change people's minds and politics."

Malik saw the global influence of international students in another way. He reflected:

I think we make a difference on the people we interact with on a day to day basis. It does make a huge difference… we come here and set an example, and it changes people's perspectives. Sometimes it's really small scale and sometimes it is big… like my freshman roommate. Like it really changed him. And we do feel a responsibility to correct people, and that gives it a step forward to change narratives.

From Malik's perspective, the global impact of his time at UCLA came from his ability to change dominant narratives about the Middle East and influence his peers' views about the region. Those peers, as his roommate example eludes to, then go off and share their new perspective with other people. Malik is picking up on the grassroots nature of citizen diplomacy and the inherent multiplying effect that results from changing opinions, one person at a time.

Howard E. Wilson (2017) argues that the multiplier effect of educational exchanges is based on two assumptions: "either alumni go on to become disproportionately powerful themselves, for example, being elected to high office or holding top civil service positions or they have disproportionate influence on public opinion (e.g. they become journalists, socialites or even teachers)." Notably, this resembles closely what Scott-Smith (2008) argues is a form of 'opinion-leader model.' However, what the participants expressed in this study was a much more grassroots process than these frameworks suggest. Grassroots change is not established solely by leaders or influential participants, it comes from sheer numbers, it comes from people influencing other people until the impact of one person has been multiplied exponentially

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(Mathews-Aydinli, 2016). This is the global potential contained within the participants' citizen diplomacy: a type of global influence that happens one person at a time.

Another example of this multiplier effect that the participants spoke about came from Emine. She explained a situation in which becoming friends with an Armenian girl not only influenced her friend's view of Turkey, but turned her friend into a citizen diplomat who could then continue to share her new perspective with others:

> One of my best friends, she is Armenian, and thought we couldn't get along and now, having met me and being friends, that goes a long way. The next time this problem is brought up she can say, "I met a Turkish person, and she doesn't feel this way" and this can change people's views.

What Emine is describing is a process of education in which the recipient can then become the educator for the next person, and so on and so forth. Ultimately then, the work of the citizen diplomat becomes shared, as students who have learned more about the Middle East are then able to educate others in a similar way. Heidi described this process in the following:

> I realized that people have questions, but are scared to ask, so getting to be good friends with people they can finally ask those questions. And it gives me a voice to defend my community and if you are open to changing, it helps to create understanding and awareness, and now this person will know and be able to defend my community.

Speaking in similar terms, Nailah explained how she saw her influence at UCLA extending to larger communities. She emphasized the educational role that she, and the other participants, played on campus and how the knowledge they shared with domestic students is just the first occurrence of knowledge sharing in a process that could continue well beyond themselves. Highlighting this multiplier effect, Nailah explained:

> Because if they [domestic students] are more knowledgeable then obviously they will encounter other people who don't know or have the same misconceptions [they had] so everyone will start understanding and will not have that misconception anymore... So like me just telling a few people, could spread and it's not just them, but more so to everyone in general.

However, it was not just the participants' understanding of a multiplier effect that led

them to believe in the potential global influence of their role at UCLA. Also coming into play

was the reality of the US being the dominant cultural and political force in the world. By

changing Americans' perspectives on the Middle East, as compared to say New Zealanders, the

participants saw a greater potential to influence the world given the disproportionate power that

the United States, and it's people, have on global narratives and culture (Berger, 2002). So by

changing American perspectives, the participants were aware of the potentially outsized impact

they could have on how the world sees and interacts with the Middle East. Taamir made this

profound observation:

> With the US involvement in international affairs, it adds more to my duties to talk about
> our experiences, especially with war and terrorism, because if you change Americans'
> minds here, maybe that person can have an even greater influence… and influence the
> rest of the world.

In general, the participants were very clear on how they saw their influence at UCLA

reaching beyond the campus and having the potential to change the perspectives of larger groups

of people and even societies. Though realistic in their assessment of how much influence each

individual participant could have, they saw their impact not in isolation but as one aspect of a

collective power that is made up of all the Middle Eastern international students. Grounded in

their lived-experiences, the participants were adamant about the multiplying nature of their

impact as citizen diplomats, the effects of which have the potential to improve not just

individuals' views of the Middle East, but groups and even entire societies.

Conclusion

The perspectives and anecdotal experiences of the participants demonstrate the profound

value of international students and the importance of universities investing seriously in their

success and support on campus. In this chapter, the participants highlighted three areas in which they saw their impact most clearly manifesting: providing international perspective and understanding, humanizing the Middle East, and creating opportunities for two-way diplomacy. These findings largely support prior research that has documented the benefits of international students (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Gurin et al., 2002), however, they provide a more nuanced assessment of how such outcomes come to fruition through highlighting the perspectives of international students as the agents of these documented outcomes. Notably, the participants were also very clear in communicating what they saw as a global dimension of their influence on campus, through the multiplying effect of everyday interactions between international and domestic students.

Importantly, the research also found that participants who articulated a global dimension to their impact at UCLA were also more likely to view their time on campus as an opportunity and responsibility to do good in the world. In other words, the larger the participants saw their impact being the more motivated they were to engage in active forms of citizen diplomacy. Ali, the participant with the most hesitation towards citizen diplomacy, was the only participant to not articulate a global dimension of his presence on campus, likely because he put very little effort into active forms of citizen diplomacy. Surely, there are other international students like Ali, who are either not aware of or resist having an influence on campus and therefore move through their time at UCLA unaware of the impact they are having, regardless of intention.

CHAPTER 8: IMPROVING INTERNATONALIZATION THROUGH CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

Many scholars have pointed out the importance of the university in creating a supportive and welcoming environment for international students when it comes to academic and social well-being (Loyd, 2003; Rice & Lee, 2007). Others, such as Eton Churchill and Margaret Deon (2006), have found the university to be vitally important in creating opportunities for international and domestic students to have meaningful interactions and engagements. Moved by this research, universities are slowly beginning to appreciate the role that they must play in providing supportive programs and environments that allow international students to succeed and thrive (Helms, Brajkovic & Struthers, 2017). However, much less research and attention has been paid to how universities can support international students as citizen diplomats.

At its best, the participants in this study viewed UCLA as being a neutral influence in terms of supporting their ability to create understanding towards the Middle East and, at its worst, as being a hindrance. Instead of feeling valued for their diversity and potential as citizen diplomats, all of the participants saw "money" as the primary or "real reason" they were admitted to UCLA. Aside from being placed into mixed dorms, the participants felt like the university did little to encourage or support them to be contributors to internationalization. This absence reinforced the participants' belief that to engage in citizen diplomacy was an individual endeavor, one not recognized nor encouraged by the university. Despite UCLA doing many of the things that have been deemed as important for international student integration, such as integrating dorms or coordinating social events (Helms, Brajkovic, & Struthers, 2017), the participants felt there were large gaps in the type of support that would help them to be effective citizen diplomats.

An overarching issue was that the participants had come to believe that they were alone in their responsibility to facilitate successful citizen diplomacy. For example, Nailah expressed her belief that it was solely up to international students, rather than the university, to help create successful diplomacy on campus this way:

> The university is not going to be like 'oh you should interact with international students.' You know what I mean? Like I feel like there's nothing the university could do other than the fact that we could make classes like just to get them more culturally aware but that's basically it.

Yet, Nailah's perspective reflects what Lee and Rice (2007) have suggested is a culture on university campuses where often international students are held responsible for shortcomings in domestic-international student interaction when it is often a result of inadequate host societies and institutions:

> Most of the literature concerning international student experiences describes their difficulties as issues of adapting or coping, which embodies the assumption that international students bear the responsibility to persist, overcome their discomfort, and integrate into the host society. (p. 388)

The participants' emphasis on individual responsibility certainly has merit, however, it also has limits. In speaking with the participants it became apparent that they faced many university-created or -enabled barriers to effective citizen diplomacy. In response, this section puts forth three recommendations for how universities can improve citizen diplomacy on their campuses.[9] While these recommendations have grown out of the shared experiences of the Middle Eastern international students in this study, they are presented as recommendations that can improve citizen diplomacy and internationalization at all universities, for all students.

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[9] Though these recommendations address just a portion of the many challenges that the participants face, given the resource limitations of many public institutions, I have chosen them due to their potential to be realized with limited financial impact on the university.

Recommendation #1: Empowerment Through Preparation

When asked what they felt like the university saw in their presence on campus, the participants struggled to think of a response and most ended up reverting to a variation of "international students add diversity;" a message they had heard at various times from the university. However, few could point to anything besides the presence of the Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars as an indication that the university cared about international students and their contributions to intercultural understanding and awareness on campus. While they saw the university as promoting diversity and inclusion in their internationalization outreach and messaging,[10] they came to believe that the university cared more about the number of international students on campus than the actual learning experiences that such diversity and inclusion could provide. Betül reflected on how the programs put forth by the Dashew Center often overlooked the cultural influence that international students have:

> I believe that international students are cultural resources that need to be more out in the open. I do not think Dashew Center is doing a really good job at that… I think they are just focusing on like going on trips and stuff… they have American culture events and like English practices, but I don't know about the cultural resource part.

Kubra expressed a similar feeling of dissatisfaction with the programming of the Dashew Center:

> I definitely think there are so many more things they [the Dashew Center] can do. I am lucky that I came in as an outgoing person, if I wasn't I don't know how I would have survived. And I think the university could do more, especially if the goal is to help educate domestic students, then I think they could do more to help acquaint us with the university, for sure.

The participants' criticism of the university programs reflect Christina Yao's (2015) observation that too often international students are seen as having to integrate into a dominant culture with

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[10] See https://global.ucla.edu/aboutus

little regard to the contributions and experiences they will have on campus (Dervin & Layne,

2013). To this end she offers a new perspective:

> International students are not part of the dominant campus culture due to their different cultural backgrounds and temporary citizenship status. Rather than focusing on integration to the dominant culture, understanding international students' perceptions of membership in a foreign college community could provide insight on the non-dominant student group's feelings of transition to their campus community. In doing so, the emphasis shifts to highlighting the non-dominant group's invisible narrative rather than on the power of the dominant culture.

Consistent with Yao's recommendation, Middle Eastern international students at UCLA

would benefit greatly from programming that focused not just on integration but on

empowerment. Since many of the participants came to UCLA not fully aware of nor prepared for

the diplomatic realities of being an international student in the US, the university should invest in

programming that prepares students for the stereotypes, representations, and identities they bring

with them into this new environment and affirms the cultural value they possess. Students should

be given space to practice talking about their new identities in the US and become comfortable

engaging with others who may see them as representatives of their country. This type of

preparation and validation could go a long way in enabling international students to better

understand their influence on campus and communicate to them that their diplomatic influence is

valued and supported. Through this empowerment, universities can more effectively facilitate

active citizen diplomacy to take place on their campuses.

One example of programming that would support international students and communicate

their value on campus are university-sponsored cultural events. As Mustafa said, "People take us

as representatives of our region, so if the school had more events or special events that helped to

teach people about the Middle East, it would be helpful." Currently, the participants lamented

that if you want to do a cultural event, you have to do it yourself and there is very little support

from the university. As Betül noted:

> If you wanted to do a cultural night… you have to do it on your own. But if there was a night, every year, that there was something for Middle Eastern students, that would be great. So it's not just about one student trying to organize things.

The university must play a major role not just in assisting international students in

adjusting to their new environment but in empowering and preparing them for successful

experiences on campus. The university needs to take this job seriously if it is their intention for

internationalization to lead to better intercultural and international understanding. A central way

to make this happen is to speak with international students about their value on campus,

encourage their active engagement in citizen diplomacy, and demonstrate support and assistance

in these activities. Otherwise, if left feeling alone or unaware of the value they have, the potential

for international students to embrace or engage in forms of citizen diplomacy is detrimentally

diminished.

Recommendation #2: Bring Domestic Students into the Equation

While the participants shared many friendships and interactions with domestic students,

they all spoke about certain social dynamics that made citizen diplomacy difficult. The

participants found the majority of domestic students to be either extremely uneducated about the

Middle East and/or unaware of the experiences of international students. These shortcomings

reflect a major structural failure on the part of the university and expose an underlying problem:

international students are looked upon as the sole contributors to internationalization while the

role of domestic students is left largely unacknowledged (Larsen, 2016). Obviously, this is not

ideal for successful internationalization, as citizen diplomacy is inherently a relational activity.

To remedy this shortcoming, universities must do a better job of bringing domestic students into conversations around internationalization and intercultural learning.

Including domestic students in internationalization initiatives can take many forms, but it should start with educating domestic students with basic knowledge of international engagement, citizen diplomacy, and identity and representation. Designing programs and opportunities that encourage or incentivize domestic students to engage with international students, not just the other way around. Intentionally mixed international-domestic student courses or general education courses on intercultural communication and engagement are just a few ways in which universities can better prepare domestic students to engage with international students and bring them into the internationalization conversation (Chang, 2008; Zhang, 2018). Additionally, the university should provide students with opportunities to learn about the Middle East outside of the context of political conflict or war to ensure a more balanced sphere of shared knowledge pertaining to the region (Modir & Kia-Keating, 2018). These actions would help to overcome the fact that many domestic students know very little about the Middle East and are therefore hesitant to engage in what is viewed as a sensitive topic, particularly when much of what they do know about the region is negative. As Sadira explained:

> Generally just like classmates or people you meet they don't really bring stuff up, I think they don't want to engage on delicate stuff like that. If it is friends, they do go like "I've heard this… do you know anything about this?" And that is it. But I feel like when they do, they have like a script that they follow because they are trying to be respectful and tip-toe… weird they need to tip-toe but that is what they do. It is like harder for people to talk about the Middle East cause they just usually don't know that much about it.

The second way in which universities should bring domestic students into internationalization is by educating them on what it is like to be an international student. As Kubra pointed out, many of the participants found domestic students to be almost completely unaware of the experiences of international students, which makes it unlikely that domestic

students would reach out or offer assistance to international students. Without domestic students

actively seeking out engagements or helping international students acclimate to campus a unique

opportunity for such friendships and interactions to happen is missed. As Kubra noted:

> I think for domestic students it's not an active decision that they think "I don't want to help these people," it is just that they don't have to. This is their city and their state, they feel comfortable, so they don't off-the-bat realize that these first few months for an international student must be so crazy. So I think it is more of that lack of recognition rather than being like "I don't want to help international students."

One way to do this is for international centers to intentionally design programs, communications,

and courses that target both domestic and international students (Zhang, 2018). As Jana

observed:

> I feel like we are very… segregated is a strong word, but there is the Dashew Center that encourages domestic students to get involved. But usually they [domestic students] don't cause they don't get emails or access. The university doesn't give domestic student emails to [the Dashew Center] to send out, so… as stupid as it sounds, just having domestic student emails or having domestic students get emails/newsletters once a month or whatever will make domestic students engage more in the international student events so both would attend and that would create a sort of mixer.

Jana continued:

> [the Dashew Center] should be geared towards international students because in the beginning it is very overwhelming and you feel very alone, so it should be geared towards international students but having domestic students be part of that experience will definitely help converge wavelengths or ways of thinking or perceptions or commonalities.

As Jana made clear, there is much to gain if domestic students were more aware of the

experiences and hardships of international students. Sometimes creating that awareness could be

as simple as ensuring that communications go to both domestic and international students.

However, the university could also create classes that are tailored to allow international and

domestic students to get to know each other better, to practice intercultural communication, and

to learn from each other's perspectives (Zhang, 2018). In the end, bringing domestic students

into internationalization need not be burdensome for the university, but it starts with a recognition of their importance and role within it.

A final way in which the university could bring domestic students into the process and activities of citizen diplomacy is by becoming aware of the importance of physical space. At UCLA, the Dashew Center is the sole entity responsible for international student concerns and it is located on the periphery of the campus. As a result, the separation of the Dashew Center from the rest of campus actively serves to segregate international students from their domestic peers. International students go to one location to get the same support that domestic students get throughout campus. Betül spoke for all the participants when she explained that, "[the] Dashew Center is kind of distant… it is like over the hill, not really on campus… it is separating, and that is what everyone says." Instead of a separated physical space, it would make an immense difference if international student centers were located centrally on campus or, even better, if international student services were decentralized across campus. One can imagine the difference it would make if all departments were trained to deal with and support international students, rather than referring them to an isolated location for all their concerns. This would allow international students to not only be able to interact and engage more frequently with their domestic peers, but would create a more inclusive campus environment.

Ultimately, it is one thing to have tailored support and academic programs for international students, it is another thing entirely for them to be segregated or divided. To improve citizen diplomacy, international students cannot be the only focus. Domestic students must be brought into these conversations through inclusive programming and intentional campus design.

Recommendation #3: Ensure Acknowledgement and Representation of International Students

A university is not a neutral entity. Every institution takes positions on political, economic, and social issues. However, each has an obligation to maintain an acute awareness for how their actions impact all of their students, including those groups who are small or often overlooked, such as Middle Eastern students. While the participants did not feel as though the university intentionally discriminated against them, they did often feel as if their views, opinions, and feelings were often overlooked in many of the university's decisions and policies. Two examples of times where the participants felt that their voices and identities were not represented by the university included the university's commitment to the Divest Turkey Campaign and the Chancellor's public condemnation of the Students for Justice in Palestine. Certainly, each university has the right to make whatever decisions they see fit, however, they should do so while fully acknowledging the impact such choices can have on specific demographics of students.

Orhan, spoke about the Chancellor's decision to publicly criticize the Students for Justice in Palestine, and explained the message it sent to Middle Eastern students:

> To have the Chancellor come out and say "I don't support these people." He is basically saying, "I don't like you guys but I have to let you speak." [It's] like they don't want us here. Because if they were impartial or if the Chancellor didn't say anything... it would have been better.

Betül voiced similar concerns and feelings related to UCLA and the UC Regents' decision to pass the Divest Turkey Campaign:

> The Divest Turkey Campaign, when it first passed it kind of made me feel unsafe… not unsafe, but… I felt like they didn't take into consideration our side of things and it was too harsh of a decision to just do that. And I feel like it just damages our [Turkish students'] reputation on campus, like what are people going to hear about it… That is what I don't know, so I don't feel represented in that sense.

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Knowing that these decisions made many in the Middle Eastern student community feel unsafe and overlooked, the implications for citizen diplomacy are obvious. If students do not feel supported or seen by the university, it is doubtful they will feel motivated or encouraged to actively participate in the campus community. Certainly, they will not feel a sense of belonging.

The solution to this barrier does not require some large policy change or financial investment. An act of signaling to these students that the university does not intend to target, exclude, or harm them through their actions may very well go a long way. If the university were to communicate to these students or create a forum for dialogue so that Middle Eastern students felt at least recognized and their misgivings acknowledged, it would lead to a more welcoming and inclusive community environment. Such inclusion would likely bolster these students' engagement on campus and ultimately, their impact as citizen diplomats.

In addition to acknowledging how its actions and decisions impact the lives of Middle Eastern international students, the university can also enhance the success of citizen diplomacy by promoting representation through international student leadership. For many of the participants, having international students represented in leadership positions was a tangible example of ways in which the university could better support their needs, signal their worth, and enhance their engagement on campus.

Several participants spoke about the significance of having international students in leadership positions so that they could impact decision-making on campus. Asim, a student leader on campus, spoke compellingly about the importance of international student leadership on campus:

> My first year here I didn't hear a lot about anything international. I really didn't. And then I think... One of the people I ran with on Bruins United got elected for General Representative 2 and she has an international student from China. So I ended up serving

as the chief of staff with her and I was elected to serve as president of the coalition that was also created the spring of the year before. And so these two initiatives combined really bolstered international student voice in a way that I don't think ever happened before. And so I can really see the strong contrast between a year where it was left all up to the administration and the university, and the year where students took initiative and demanded that they be heard more. Which makes me recognize that the university wasn't doing much in the first place.

Asim was able to see, firsthand, the impact that just one international student representative could have on decision and policy making. Indeed, his view was consistent with other research that suggests having international students in leadership positions can enhance overall international student support and well-being (Georges & Chen, 2018). Ensuring that international students are in leadership positions on campus helps to guarantee that their perspectives are considered in decision-making processes and also signals their belonging and worth on campus.

Unfortunately, international students often face many barriers to getting involved in leadership roles, particularly in student government. Kubra explained that international students are disadvantaged when it comes to running for leadership positions in several important ways:

Realistically, to gain a leadership role in student government, you have to probably do something starting in freshman year. Like my freshman year, I was just orienting myself the whole year to college life and classes but also like I live alone now in America and I need to learn how to do this on my own. So that definitely contributes to it. I also think that there is a small sense to which international students feel like what right do I have here? Why should I contribute? Like UCLA is a public school, this isn't my school or my place, this wasn't a system built for me, it was built for California students. So there is that bit of reservation… it is not your place to get involved.

While these are not intentional barriers created by the university or any single person, they demonstrate a power imbalance that fundamentally disadvantages international students, who are a sizable and growing population on many major universities, including UCLA.

To ensure international students representation in leadership positions, universities should develop policies and strategies that encourage and support these students in seeking out leadership roles. This could include personalized outreach to international students to recruit

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them for leadership positions, creating student government seats or committees specifically for international students, or creating training programs that assist international students in locating and getting involved in positions on campus. By providing this type of support, and ensuring international student representation, universities will be enabling citizen diplomacy to thrive by guaranteeing that international students have tangible proof that they are a valued and represented group on campus. This sense of belonging and ownership will go a long way in creating the type of open environment needed to empower international students to be active citizen diplomats.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

This dissertation began with a desire to understand how universities can be better actors in the creation of a more connected and peaceful world. Through a qualitative approach, I endeavored to centralize the voices of international students from the Middle East in order to shine light on their unique perspectives and experiences in the US. In particular, I sought to investigate how Middle Eastern international students understood and made meaning of their diplomatic/cultural identity and influence at UCLA. What emerged were stories, experiences, and insights that powerfully displayed the vital role that these students play in creating more culturally aware and understanding university communities, and just possibly, entire societies. However, they also revealed the complexity of citizen diplomacy and the numerous challenges that individual students face in assuming such a role.

Since the project began in 2017, there have been many shifts in government policy towards both the Middle East and international students that have seemed to push the goals of humanistic internationalization further from our collective grasp. In light of the numerous, short-sighted government policies that have attempted to limit the flow of international students and Middle Eastern people into the US, the findings of this project have taken on a new importance. These findings are evidence of not only the tremendous value that international students bring to the US, but the precariousness of taking this value for granted. Policies that seek to disrupt the movement of students not only harm universities economically, but more importantly, hinder their ability to create learning environments that facilitate international understanding. As this project makes clear, universities play a role in international relations, and it is incumbent upon them to take this responsibility seriously by investing in internationalization and citizen diplomacy while strongly opposing policies that seek to inhibit their potential.

Summary of Findings

Chapter 5 explored the participants' identity at UCLA. Consistent with the research on international students, it became clear that all the participants experienced significant shifts in how they identified themselves, as well as how they saw others identify them. However, the data also revealed a short coming in the literature; the dominant theories of international student development woefully under appreciate the role that American culture has in influencing the identities of its hosted Middle Eastern students. Describing international student identities as third place identities, in-between identities or transnational identities (Bhabha, 1994; Kim, 2012; Kramsch, 1993) may effectively communicate the fluidity of student identity, however, they only partially describe the experiences of students from the Middle East. These theories fail to capture the negativity and hostility that comes along with being Middle Eastern in the US (Marvasti, 2005). For all the participants, they saw their individual identity move towards a broader, Middle Eastern identity that was looked upon unfavorably by both American culture and government. Due to this shift in identity, the participants were often confronted with misunderstandings and prejudices during their interactions and engagements on campus. Ultimately, with their identity a more salient part of their everyday lives, the participants became much more aware of the gaps between how people viewed them and how they viewed themselves, leaving them feeling more Middle Eastern, and more different, than ever before.

Chapter 6 looked more directly at the diplomatic experiences that the participants had on campus and how they were influenced by their Middle Eastern identity. What came to light was that they faced a type of "spokesperson pressure" on account of being seen by others as unofficial diplomats or representatives of the Middle East (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The

participants provided numerous examples in which they represented the Middle East in the eyes of their domestic counterparts. At times, this representation was unintentional, resulting from domestic students assuming that the participants' actions, opinions, or even physical characteristics, were representative of an entire region. However, more often, the participants' representation of the Middle East was intentional, as they would make conscious decisions to inform or educate their domestic peers about the Middle East. This form of active citizen diplomacy was motivated by a sense of responsibility to both counter negative stereotypes of the Middle East and to educate their domestic peers about a region few seemed to know anything about. This distinction, between active and passive forms of citizen diplomacy (i.e. representation), is noteworthy as it is not reflected in the current literature on international students (Larsen, 2016). Moreover, it suggests strongly that the humanistic benefits of internationalization arise not solely from international students being on campus, but from individual students choosing to participate and engage in citizen diplomacy.

Chapter 7 goes beyond prior research that documents the benefits of international students (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Gurin et al., 2002) to look at how the participants perceived their own influence and impact on campus. It was found that nearly all the participants were confident and aware of the fact that they were a positive diplomatic influence on their peers and campus community. Specifically, the participants saw their influence as citizen diplomats breaking down into three main categories: improving international perspective and understanding, humanizing the Middle East, and creating opportunities for two-way diplomacy. Notably, the participants viewed these influences as having repercussions beyond the immediate, as they explained a type of multiplier effect whereby those whom they had influenced would then influence subsequent individuals, effectively growing the participants' initial impact

(Mathews-Aydinli, 2016). Ultimately, the participants understood their actions at UCLA to have both local and global implications, and were not shy in articulating what they saw as the global implications of their citizen diplomacy efforts, despite facing numerous barriers along the way. This chapter argues strongly that the importance of international students goes far beyond any monetary value that they might provide to the university.

In Chapter 8, using the participants' data as both evidence and support, three essential recommendations were provided for universities looking to improve citizen diplomacy and enhancing the humanistic outcomes of their internationalization programs. First, universities must ensure that international students are fully prepared for and supported in their participation in citizen diplomacy. Too often the participants felt that they were not only unprepared but unsupported in being effective citizen diplomats. Therefore, universities must invest in programming and services that assist international students to be successful diplomats and that affirm the value they bring to campus. Second, universities need to acknowledge the important role that domestic students play within internationalization. As a relational endeavor, citizen diplomacy requires domestic students to play an equal role in the realization of successful student interactions and engagement. Third, universities must do a better job of recognizing the experiences of international students and ensuring their representation in university leadership and decision-making. Only through creating environments that are inclusive and empowering for all students, domestic and international, can the full potential of internationalization be realized.

Implications for Research, Practice and Policy

Research

An established body of literature has already demonstrated the very real benefits that international students bring to their host campuses and beyond, such as international understanding and perspective-taking. However, too often, this scholarship has spent more time focused on the outcomes of internationalization rather than the processes through which these outcomes come to fruition. Therefore, the purpose of this research project was to move beyond traditional paradigms to look more intricately at how the benefits of internationalization come into being and the role that individuals play in these outcomes. By documenting how international students engage in both passive *and* active citizen diplomacy, the findings presented in this dissertation offer compelling evidence that humanistic outcomes do not appear purely as a result of exposure, but of intentional effort on behalf of individual students. This finding also provides guidance to the literature on international relations and citizen diplomacy, as it adds complexity to our collective understanding of how individuals play a role in fostering understanding across cultures and countries. Future research, in both education and international relations, must do better in acknowledging the agency of students as both passive *and* active contributors to internationalization and diplomacy.

Moreover, it is abundantly clear that international students face unique challenges as a result of contemporary social and geo-political environments. While this dissertation highlights this reality for students from the Middle East, it is equally as true for students from all regions of the world. Any research on international students must acknowledge the geo-political factors that inevitably create the broader context within which these students must learn to navigate. For example, Middle Eastern international students' experiences cannot be understood outside of the

context of Islamophobia and US-Middle East relations. Whether consciously or not, international students carry with them a political identity and exist within a particular political moment, and any research to understand their experiences is incomplete without first appreciating and acknowledging this critical reality.

Additional research is needed to build upon the conclusions drawn in this project. Future projects would do well to expand the findings provided here to look at the experiences of Middle Eastern and other groups of international students in various environments, so that variables like geographic location, college size and reputation can be factored into the analysis. It would also be valuable for future research to observe the daily experiences and interactions of the international students, as well as how the participants' gender, class, and race might influence these findings. Lastly, an area rich for investigation is to study the ways in which domestic students and staff perceive of and experience their international students on campus.

Practice

The data presented throughout this dissertation provides clear evidence to the tremendous benefit that international students bring to their domestic peers and communities and demonstrates that the value of internationalization spans far beyond the economic stimulus of international student tuition. I argue that universities must take the humanistic value of internationalization more seriously, as the benefits it imparts on both campuses, and entire societies, are both demonstrable and meaningful. Particularly in a moment in history when the US government has turned away from traditional forms of diplomacy and has followed a path of isolationism, universities can help to fill the void left behind. Universities must embrace and take responsibility for their role as diplomatic actors because doing so is not just an ethical obligation,

but the fulfillment of their educational promise to prepare students to be successful actors in a global world.

However, as I argue in Chapter 8, the full potential of internationalization is currently not being realized due in large part to an overreliance in the outdated belief that bringing diverse students to campus (i.e. contact alone) is sufficient to producing beneficial outcomes. Contrary to this notion, the data presented here highlights the complex and individual nature of internationalization and citizen diplomacy. As such, there are many things that universities can do to improve their implementation and design of internationalization.

First and foremost, universities must understand that the benefits of international students are not automatic. So much of what results from bringing international students to campus is a product of not just their physical presence, but of their preparation and preparedness to navigate their new environment in ways that are beneficial to citizen diplomacy. As such, it should be incumbent upon universities to provide training and educational opportunities that provide the skills needed for international students to have meaningful and positive engagements with their domestic peers. Much in the same way that universities prepare students for success through writing and public speaking courses, so too should they prepare students for the intercultural interactions and engagements they will encounter on campus.

Second, universities must do a better job in bringing domestic students into conversations around internationalization and giving them more responsibility in its success. Too often international students are left feeling like the sole purveyors of intercultural knowledge and understanding, when in fact successful citizen diplomacy requires ownership by all sides. Just as international students should be prepared for their new environments, domestic students should be provided the skills and opportunities to engage successfully with their international peers. In a

society of growing discrimination and Islamophobia, the stakes are too high to assume that students will learn these lessons on their own. As the participants in this study understood, the benefits of successful citizen diplomacy are great, but the consequences of its failure are far greater. Universities must own this responsibility by preparing students to engage interculturally, facilitating interaction, and intentionally designing programs and physical spaces in ways that serve this goal.

Third, universities must stop making international students feel like visitors on campus and begin investing in both their academic *and* social success. While their time in the US might indeed be limited, the time that international students spend on campus is as permanent as any. Accordingly, universities should invest in the recruitment and training of international students for leadership positions; invest in training staff across campus to support international students instead of siphoning their services to a single location; and be intentional in incorporating international students' perspectives and needs into university decision-making processes.

Policy

As a project investigating the application of citizen diplomacy on college campuses, there are direct implications for government policy in the areas of soft power and public diplomacy. Most directly, the data presented in this dissertation support, in the strongest possible terms, the importance of educational exchange and international student programs as methods of successful diplomacy. The participants' experiences and influence on campus are convincing testimony of the value citizen diplomacy in the world. Programs promoting student mobility should continue to be supported and invested in. However, policy makers would do well to not only promote the movement of students, but support and hold universities responsible for ensuring successful

diplomacy. This should include policies that incentivize, either financially or otherwise, universities to demonstrate their plans to facilitate successful intercultural interaction and engagement. Using the Fulbright program or other government-sponsored student programs as models, government policy should invest in and promote citizen diplomacy training programs to take place at universities. Such a diffused model of diplomacy not only benefits the United States, but the prospects for peace and security across the world.

Final Thoughts

It does not take an astute person to imagine that it might be difficult for an 18-year old student to travel from the Middle East to study in the United States. Culture shock, homesickness, and language barriers are things that all international students face, but for students from the Middle East that list is substantially longer. Discrimination, prejudice, and negative connotations abound when it comes to being Middle Eastern in the United States, particularly during the presidency of Donald J. Trump. Yet, in speaking with the 22 students who participated in this study, I was left in awe at the resiliency of their spirit and the determination of their will. Faced with burdens and obstacles each and every day, compounded by pressure to be positive representatives of their home countries, somehow they retained an outlook of overwhelming positivity. I heard countless stories of discrimination against these students that made me livid, but somehow they seemed unaffected, or even more astonishing, they seemed understanding of the ignorance and prejudice that confronted them. Mature beyond their years, the participants were able to look beyond these experiences and stay committed to being the best versions of themselves. It takes a truly strong person to come to the US, knowing the hateful narratives about the Middle East that pour out of American media and news outlets everyday.

At the end of this project, I am now, more than ever, convinced of the absolute importance of having international students on US campuses. Though often unsupported and isolated, these students not only share their unique perspectives and knowledge with us, but they demonstrate resounding resiliency. The relationship between international students and their host universities is a mutual one, where both sides get out what they put in. But right now, the potential benefits of this relationship are being left unfilled. International students have more to contribute to our campuses and to our world, but it is up to us to meet them halfway. International students make our campuses, and our societies better, and we must not take that for granted.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What is the Middle East? How do you define or think about it? Why do you consider yourself Middle Eastern?

- **UNIVERSITY DECISION**
1. What influenced/motivated you to study outside of your home country?
   a. Why did you choose the US? UCLA?

2. What apprehensions did you have before coming?
   a. How did you overcome those?
   b. Have they manifested at all?

3. How, if at all, did geopolitical events (tension between the US and M.E., Islamophobia, etc.) play any role in your decision-making process?

- **EXPERIENCES ON CAMPUS/CITIZEN DIPLOMACY**
4. Can you tell me what a normal day would be like for you on campus?
   a. What are you interactions like with domestic students?
   b. Where do they typically take place?

5. Before coming to UCLA, how it important was it for you to interact with American/domestic students? And now?
   a. Before coming to UCLA, how much time did you anticipate being with/hanging out with domestic students vs. international students? Has that been accurate?

6. Before coming to UCLA, how would you have thought that people at UCLA would perceive you (as a person from the Middle East)?
   a. Now, how do you think they perceive you?
      i. Where do you think these perceptions come from?
   b. What do you think you represent in the eyes of people on UCLA campus?
      i. Is this a fair representation?
      ii. How does this relate to stereotypes of the Middle East?

7. How often do students on campus ask you where you are from?
   a. How does that make you feel?

8. Do students ever ask you about the Middle East or your home country (news, culture, current events, etc.)?
   a. How does that make you feel?
   b. Why do you think they ask *you?*

Appendix B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- **WARM UP**
1. How old are you? What is your home country? What is your nationality? What is your field of study?
2. What program are you in at UCLA, how long have you been here and how long will you stay?

- **PERSONAL HISTORY**
1. Tell me about your family
2. Tell me about your up-brining and childhood
3. What types of international experiences have you had?
4. How do you like being in America? What are some things you like/dislike?
5. How was funding discussed for you to attend college in the US?

- **YOUR OWN IDENTITY**
1. What is your personality like (ex: are you outgoing or shy?) ?
2. How do you identify yourself? (Male, Arab, Muslim, etc.?)
   a. Do you consider yourself Middle Eastern?
3. Can you recall any experiences/situations in which you were really aware of this identity?
4. Why do you think you identify yourself in this way?
   a. What experiences have been important in the development of your identity?
5. How often do you think about your identity?
   a. Is this different from before you came to the US?
6. Is it important to you that other people know/are aware of how you identify yourself?
7. What impact do you think your identity has on your life?
8. What groups do you think you belong to on campus?

- **UNIVERSITY DECISION**
9. What influenced/motivated you to study outside of your home country?
   a. Why did you choose the US? UCLA?
   b. Did you think about going to other schools? If so, what experience do you think you would have had there?
   c. Can you remember what are some things you knew about UCLA?
10. How prepared did you feel to study in the US/UCLA? Did you have any preparation (formal or informal) that helped to prepare you?
11. What apprehensions did you have before coming?
    a. How did you overcome those?
    b. Have they manifested at all?
12. Did geopolitical events (tension between the US and M.E., Islamophobia, etc.) play any role in your decision-making process?

13. Have you heard the term internationalization? What does it mean to you?

14. What did you know about UCLA in terms of its internationalization or global character? Did this have any impact on your decision

Are you a Middle Eastern international student at UCLA?

If so, a UCLA researcher is looking for volunteers to participate in a qualitative research study aimed to better understand the experiences and perspectives of Middle Eastern students.

Participation in the study consists of partaking in a group interview to be
held between October 2018 – November 2018.

Complimentary food and drinks are provided to all participants2

Please fill out ***this survey***
or email _____
if you are interested.

Thank you!

Appendix D

Thank you for your interest in this research study entitled,

International Students a Contributors to Internationalization: A Qualitative Study of Middle Eastern Students at U.S. Universities.

If you would like to be a part of this study, please complete the following survey. Participation consists of participating in a focus group interview lasting between 1.5 – 2 hours, between October and November 2018. As compensation, complimentary food and drinks will be provided.

Survey questions consist of:

Name:
Email:
Year in school:
Are you a full-time student?
Major:
Gender:
Age:
Home Country:

Additionally, at the end of the survey, you will be asked if you'd be interested in participating in an additional individual interview (with monetary compensation).

IMPORTANT: All of the information you provide in this survey and in any of your future participation in this study will kept confidential and coded to ensure privacy. If you agree to all the above, please "click" yes and you will be taken to the survey.

If you have further questions, please wait, and email me directly and I will be happy to answer any questions or concerns you might have.

Do you understand and consent to the information provided, (Yes or No)
(If yes, routes to next page with survey)

Survey Questions (open ended):
Name:
Email:
Year in school:
Are you a full-time student?
Major:
Gender:
Age:
Home Country:

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