The Role of Schooling for Refugees in Protracted Situations in Malaysia: Protection, Identity Maintenance and Acculuturation

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the under-researched area of refugee schools in Malaysia that cater to children in protracted positions. With very few scholarly studies on the subject, the researcher sought to explore the role and function of these places of education for the communities they serve. Of specific interest to the study was an understanding of the rationale for communities from the same country (Myanmar) to educate children within separate schools. A literature review outlined a number of research gaps in relation to these schools, which included how protection is defined and managed, the salience of language, faith and culture, and the impact of living in a foreign country for many years.

Adopting an interpretivist stance, the dissertation positions itself in the worldview of the participants; however, given their refugee status, the study remained vigilant to the notion that legal and social structures could impede or influence decision-making within the social world the research participants inhabit. Theoretically, Stryker's (2008) structural interactionism was incorporated into the study as a way to explore how the individual interprets the world, but the theory acknowledges that structures such as schools can shape the individual. The research design is based on a multi-sited ethnography of three separate refugee schools in Malaysia. To ensure a divergent and broad sample range, each school served communities from Myanmar but catered to three ethnic groups (Rvwang, Mon, and Rohingya) that are separated along ethnic, geographic, linguistic, and religious lines. Data were collected via participant observation, field notes, and semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, community and religious leaders, and parents, while an ongoing process of iterative consent and reflexivity ensured that ethnical

challenges could be met and managed. Data were managed and uploaded to NVivo for analysis whereby a two-layer approach was designed to examine the data inductively with grounded theory techniques and deductively based on themes generated from the literature review.

The three main areas that emerged from the two-layer analysis were protection, identity, and acculturation, and to further scrutinise the data and findings, analytical lenses were used as a tool through which to explore the findings in greater depth. First, using the integrated threat theory of prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 2013), the researcher found that the schools in the study function as ethnic safe spaces where aside from the assurance of physical safety, children were free to assert their ethnicity which in turn created a sense of familiarity and security. Second, and significantly, areas related to identities such as language, faith, and culture emerged throughout the analysis and were found to influence how Imagined Communities (ICs) (Anderson, 1983; Kanno, 2003; Norton, 2001) were envisioned by each centre. The ICs functioned across transnational and temporal boundaries as they worked to influence language usage and prepare children for uncertain futures. Due to the protracted situations of the participants, the refugee schools played an important role in managing acculturation (Berry, 1997), with each school developing responses based on the relationship favoured with the host nation. Underpinning the function of the refugee schools and the relationship with the social world were the core values (Smolicz, 1981) that were safeguarded and passed on in the form of language, faith, and culture. Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates that the schools are complex ethnospheres that are the nexus of the community and encapsulate the specific culture of the communities they serve. This finding has important implications for research into refugee schools in Malaysia but

also may help nations in other contexts understand why some communities disconnect from the wider society and forge educational solutions that more accurately reflect their values.

Acknowledgments

For Louise and Efa.

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Introduction

From the largest nation to the smallest community, education exists in some form or other. Its influence is apparent and none more so than with the industrial revolution, which saw a move from countryside living to urban cities. The effect of moving to new ways of working and living in cities "…dislocated old patterns of life and the traditional culture and pursuits of the countryside" (Lawson & Silver, 1973, p. 227). During this time, a debate revolved around the purpose of education with three powerful groups (public educators, industrial trainers, and old humanists) vying for the power to influence the curriculum, which ultimately went to the more powerful industrial groups that emphasised vocational training (Williams, 1961). Still, over a hundred years later the influence of these three groups can be found where Rex (1987) explained that education has three main foci: social selection, skill transmission, and civic morality (p. 218). What this brief foray into the past demonstrates is that education is transformative, because it addresses the needs and aspirations of the nation or the group that possesses the power to provide it.

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate how representatives from refugee communities in Malaysia transform their social world through education. More specifically, it aims to show in what form education manifests for these communities who have no access to state education because of their standing in the country as illegal immigrants. Empirically, the dissertation explores how the participants, through schooling and personalised education, have carved out their own unique vision of education in order to meet precise needs and aspirations. The study was conducted on sites that consisted of three separate refugee schools whose participants all originated in Myanmar or have ties to the country through family

members. From a sociological perspective, the schools present a social phenomenon in that each school serves a community that is ethnically, linguistically, and religiously disparate from the next even though the nationality of the individuals is the same. In the homeland of Myanmar, all three communities face challenges to schooling, as a national educational policy geared towards a single national identity based on the dominant ethnic Burma group prevails (South, 2003). In Malaysia, the provision of schooling is equally challenging as it has to be constructed from the ground up by representatives from the community. Classes are initially held in apartments by individuals from the community who offer lessons in the subjects they are familiar with. Then, if through social mobility individuals can collectively band together resources and enough funding, a school can be established. Comparatively to state schools, the thesis explores a number of similar areas. Where there is significant divergence, however, is that these areas come not from the national but from the community level and closely reflect the values to which the parents want their children inculcated.

Theoretically, the dissertation opens a line of inquiry into a field that has received relatively little attention. Research into refugee causes is extensive. Nevertheless, research on refugees in protracted situations is less so. Because of this, a new conceptual understanding of education is required as the participants in the study have 'unknowable futures' (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). How this temporal situation is conceptualised through the refugee schools produces a number of theoretical insights that force the re-examination of the protective roles of schools, the salience of language and faith, and the impact living in a foreign country has on educational choices. The schools in the study offer a valuable look into an alternative educational system that is almost entirely independent of national aims

and goals. Therefore, the findings from the dissertation are significant not only for research on education for refugees in protracted situations, but can be applied to nations in other contexts. Future researchers may want to explore why some communities have become detracted from state schooling in favour of establishing parallel or community-based educational systems.

Research Questions

For the purpose of the dissertation, the following research questions were developed with an overarching question, which is further developed by 4 sub-questions.

General Question

What is the role of learning centres for displaced communities in Malaysia?

Sub-questions

1. What needs and aspirations have displaced communities responded to in establishing and maintaining learning centres?
2. How do the learning centres approach the meeting of these needs and aspirations?
3. What challenges do the displaced communities face in using the learning centres to meet their needs and aspirations?
4. How have the learning centres evolved as a result of the challenges and changing needs and aspirations?

Contribution to Knowledge

The study makes a significant contribution to knowledge through the findings presented below.

- *Protection* - In addition to mitigating the threats to physical well-being, the learning centres conceptualise protection in more personal terms. The ethnic safe space (ESS) expands previously held understandings of protection to include the preservation of ethnic characteristics such as language, faith, and culture. Moreover, the ESS creates a psychological safe space with the presence of others who share the same cultural background.
- *Faith* - Significant in the study is the integrative role that faith plays as it is embedded into the school day and has a close attachment to identity and community membership.
- *Language Shift & Maintenance* - Some of the first findings on language shift and maintenance for refugees in protracted positions is presented. The findings indicate that learning centres influence the preservation or shift of ethnic language use.
- *Imagined Communities (ICs)* - The first account of the imagined community envisioned by each learning centre is offered. Language, faith, culture, and what preparation is necessary are important components that make up each IC.
- *Learning centres* - The study presents the learning centres in a different light. Far from simply being containers for subject-orientated learning, they are complex social ethnospheres that encapsulate the needs and aspirations of the communities they serve and transmit their core values.
- *Analytical Lenses* - Applied to the context integrated threat theory, imagined communities, acculturation, language shift and maintenance, and core values are used for the first time in relation to learning centres.

- *Acculturation* - The protracted situations of the participants in the study means the learning centres are instrumental in managing acculturation with responses that move towards separation and assimilation.
- *Core Values* - Encompassing language, faith, and/or culture, understanding the core values of the learning centres may help to explain why some communities in other contexts separate from state educational schools to establish complementary schools that more accurately reflect their own values.
- *Education for refugees in Protracted Situations* - With little theoretical insight into education for refugees in protracted situations offered in the literature, a working conceptualisation of the role and function for education is presented that builds around significant findings and themes found in the dissertation. Though it is not a full working model, it provides a starting point for future studies to build from with the inclusion of protection, preparation, and acculturation.

Defining Key Terms

The study defines the following key terms, presented below.

- *Refugee* - Various terminology is used and has been developed to categorise refugees. The two most common are refugee and asylum seeker; however, displaced person or migrant are often used interchangeably in various contexts. This illustrates the complexity that assigning terms for groups of people carries. The terms given to various groups may be in keeping with how they are viewed from the outside, but not how they see themselves. For the purpose of the dissertation, the term refugee is used as it pertains to a

person who is escaping conflict. Though it is a broad term, it is the word that the participants in the study most often used to describe their situation and others like them.

- *Learning Centre* - School and education are broad terms, and within both there are various sub-areas that elicit different conceptualisations. In the literature, places that educate refugees are commonly referred to as refugee schools. In the context of counties where a parallel school system functions to educate minority groups, these places are often referred to as complementary schools. To avoid confusion and to distinguish the places that educate refugees in the dissertation, the term learning centre (LC) is used.

Overview of Research Methods

The researcher adopted an interpretivist stance for the dissertation in which the singular realities of the individual are taken into account. The study incorporated Stryker's (2008) expanded version of Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism called Structural Interactionism (SI), which views interaction as leading to patterns rather than being fluid. By utilising SI, the study could investigate the individual but also take into consideration the participants' positions as refugees and acknowledge their susceptibility to social and legal structures, which may dictate to some extent how interaction occurs and develops.

An ethnographic approach was taken to the collection of data based on the work of Carspecken (1996) and Hammersley (2006). To provide a cross-comparative analysis of the data, three sites were selected. The three learning centres all serve individuals from Myanmar, yet are separated by their ethnicity,

language usage, and religion. The diversity in each site meant that even though the country of origin was the same, the findings could be analysed to look for relationships and divergence across the three groups. Data were collected in the form of semi-structured interviews (Madison, 2012) with community leaders, parents, teachers, students, and religious leaders. Also, the researcher conducted participant observation in all three sites (Bernard, 2011; Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011). During the sessions, the researcher taught and assisted with classes in each centre that provided the opportunity to participate in the daily routines of each learning centre. Field notes were written in line with Dewalt and Dewalt's (2011) three-layer approach to capture what was observed and a reflexive element to reflect on each day's fieldwork.

Data were analysed with NVivo using a two-layer approach. The first approach used grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) in which themes emerged inductively from the data. The second layer used themes generated from the literature review to conduct a deductive analysis of the data. Underpinning the whole research process was an ethnical framework based on iterative consent (McKenzie, McDowell & Pittway, 2007) and a reflexive guide (Bailey & Williams, 2018). The approach ensured the study followed a set ethical framework and allowed the researcher to remain reflexive throughout the whole research process.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2

To provide a background to the issues covered in the dissertation, Chapter 2 explores themes that are present in the literature. To capture a wide range of thoughts and findings, the chapter is split into three distinct sections. The first

section provides a background to refugees in Malaysia, and it is here that a sense of the refugee experience is found. This section is important as it provides an overview of reports on the experiences of refugees in urban environments that are forced into protracted situations. To conclude this section, a discussion on the educational opportunities for refugees in Malaysia is provided. Section 2 builds on the previous section and looks to the literature to understand how education is provided for children in three unique situations: refugee camp-based education, urban education, and complementary education. From the literature, a number of themes began to emerge from the findings, and these themes provide the basis for a greater and more in-depth discussion in the final section, which is centred around three main themes: protection, identity, and acculturation. The literature on these themes goes into a more detailed discussion to unpack these areas as they pertain to education for refugees, and a number of research gaps were identified.

Chapter 3

This chapter outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework for the study. The study takes an interpretivist epistemological position and incorporates Stryker's (2008) structural interactionism as a theoretical perspective. Following this, a section titled research design outlines the ethnographic methodology and discusses the data collection methods, which included semi-structured interviews and participant observation. In addition to this, the sampling methods for the learning centres and participants are outlined. The next area provides a background of each community the learning centres serve with a brief history of the situation in the homeland. Included in this is a floor plan of each learning centre and a description of the areas in which they are located. The following section then covers

the ethical considerations taken for the study and adopts Iterative Consent (MacKenzie, McDowell & Pittway, 2007) and a reflexive guide (Bailey & Williams, 2018) as an ethical framework. The concluding sections in Chapter 3 explain how trustworthiness (Guba, 1981) is used in place of reliability and validity.

Chapter 4

In the first of three analytical chapters, Chapter 4 uses Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice (ITTP) (Stephan & Stephan, 2013) as a lens through which to conceptualise threats faced by the participants in Malaysia and the role that the learning centres play in their mitigation. Each centre is analysed in isolation, which culminates in the construction of a protective strategy for each centre. To provide a point of contrast, threats are analysed from the perspective of the participants as well as the perspective of dominant groups for the purpose of a cross-comparative analysis. The main findings of the chapter are that threats are all encompassing and vary in their range and influence. This chapter provides insight that works towards a conceptualisation of the protective needs of learning centres and expands the idea of the ethnic safe space.

Chapter 5

In the most detailed analysis of all the chapters, Chapter 5 uses the theory of Imagined Communities (ICs) (Anderson, 1983) as a tool to conceptualise the salience of faith, language, and culture. By exploring the construction of each imagined community as envisioned by the centres, the chapter also takes into consideration meso and macro-level structures that have influenced how each IC is formed. The chapter finishes with an exploratory theoretical model that outlines the

influence that imagined communities have on identity formation. Finally, the components that constitute imagined communities are presented and discussed.

Chapter 6

In the final analytical chapter, acculturation (Berry, 1997) is used as a lens through which to analyse each centre. This viewpoint allowed the researcher to explore how the participants are adapting to life in Malaysia through the learning centres. This chapter consists of a number of analytical discussions. The first explores dress acculturation and examines if the clothing worn by the children in the centre reflects the ethnic identity of the community or the culture of the host nation. The next discussion explores language maintenance and shift (Fishman, 1964) to ascertain what language is used primarily in the centre and if the centre encourages ethnic language or if the language of choice has been influenced by the wider society. Then, using the findings from this chapter, as well as Chapters 4 and 5, an acculturation response is constructed for each centre that provides insight into how each learning centre reacts to life in Malaysia. To investigate the acculturation response in more detail and to attempt to identify a rationale, Smolicz's (1981) Core Values are used as a tool by which to examine what value is central to each centre and if this influences acculturation responses.

Chapter 7

The penultimate chapter provides a discussion and synthesis of the main findings from the thesis. Beginning with a summary of analytical chapters 4, 5, and 6, this chapter then moves to a discussion on some of the more pertinent findings, which include the importance of faith, language, and core values, and explores the

complex nature of the learning centres. The section finishes with a discussion on agency and structure, and the impact these areas have had on the centres. To conclude this chapter, a working conceptualisation of education for refugees in protracted situations is presented that builds on the work of Dryden-Peterson (2016) and adds three key areas.

Chapter 8

The final chapter in this dissertation addresses the research questions that have guided the study since the beginning. The main research question and sub-questions are all addressed individually in relation to the findings from the analytical chapters. Next, a section that explores the implications for research within the field of refugees as well as further afield in another educational context is presented. Following this, there is a discussion of the limitations of the study after which the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter explores the research available on refugee schools and non-formal education around the world. With the lack of research available on refugee education in Malaysia, the aim of this chapter is to explore concepts of education in other countries and examine how and if they could relate to the Malaysian perspective. The chapter is presented in three sections. Section 1 provides an overview of the refugee situation in Malaysia and explores what educational opportunities are available. The next section reviews the literature on refugee and complementary schools from other parts of the world. The research in this area provides themes upon which the third section will build. The final section, which is more substantial, explores the themes identified in section 2 in greater detail, and identifies theories and approaches that could be used to investigate refugee education in Malaysia. The chapter culminates in a discussion of the gaps in the research and how the research question for the dissertation addresses these gaps.

Section 1

Refugees in Malaysia

Of the reported 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide (UNHCR, 2019a), Malaysia has an estimated 170,460 refugees (UNHCR, 2019b). In South-East Asia, the countries that have the largest population of refugees are themselves not signatories to the 1951 convention on the status or refugees, with the exception of Cambodia and the Philippines (Cheung, 2011). In signing the convention, a country states that they will assist and protect refugees who cannot return to their

home country due to political associations, religion, ethnicity, or nationality for fear of persecution (UNHCR, 2010). Malaysia is not a signatory to the convention (Azis, 2014; Hoffstaedter, 2014; Mathew & Harley, 2014), which means they are free to classify refugees as undocumented immigrants (Hoffstaedter, 2014).

Malaysia has seen waves of immigration since the 1970s (Azis, 2014), caused by people seeking economic and social mobility, and refuge from oppressive regimes or conflicts. Yet, in 2002 the Malaysian government enforced a stricter immigration act that saw the authorities crack down on what they deemed to be undocumented or illegal immigrants with the use of detention, deportation, and imprisonment (Cheung, 2011). If Malaysia had been a signatory of the convention, the rights of these people would have been protected, but as it stands, they are granted no access to a court of law, health care, basic human rights, or primary education. Moreover, a clause of the immigration act also states that anyone harbouring these 'illegal immigrants' by providing a place to stay or even renting property will also face prosecution. With authorities receiving carte blanche on whom they may stop, refugees are susceptible to police searches and immigration raids upon which some may be detained until negotiations with the UNHCR can secure their release (Hoffstaedter, 2014; Low, Kok & Lee, 2014; Nah, 2010).

There are no camps in Malaysia (Nah, 2010), so asylum seekers who arrive are left to find low-cost housing around the city (UNHCR, 2011). At present, it is estimated that the number of people who have taken refuge in Malaysia lies at 99,381, with asylum seekers (51,240), stateless persons (40,000), and various concerns (80,000) bringing the total to 270,621 (UNHCR, 2015). Though refugees who arrive in Malaysia may have left hardships behind, they subsequently find new ones. Aside from employment, health care, safety, and housing, education is

another significant obstacle to overcome. It is estimated that there are about 46,340 children under the age of 18 currently living in Malaysia (these statistics vary, though), and, of this less than 40% are able to access some form of education (UNHCR, 2019).

Recent developments in Malaysia have seen a change in rhetoric from the government towards refugees. In 2018 the Barisan Nasional party, which had been in power since Malaysia's independence in 1957, was ousted by a new party, Pakatan Harapan, led by one of Malaysia's former Prime Ministers, Mahathir Mohamad ("Malaysia Election," 2018). Armed with a new social agenda, the party announced a list of fresh promises, some of which outlined a new position and relationship with the 150,000 refugees currently residing in Malaysia. In addition to leading efforts to address the Rohingya and Palestine crises (promise 59), promise 35 of the Pakatan Harapan (2018) manifesto outlines this new relationship:

> Recognising that Malaysia is hosting more than 150,000 refugees, including Rohingyas and Syrians, the Pakatan Harapan Government will legitimise their status by providing them with UNHCR cards and ensuring their legal right to work. Their labour rights will be at par with locals and this initiative will reduce the country's need for foreign workers and lower the risk of refugees from becoming involved in criminal activities and underground economies. Providing them with jobs will help refugees to build new lives and without subjecting them to oppression. (p. 78)

For communities this is a seismic shift in policy towards refugees in Malaysia, even if one aim of promise 35 is to "…lower the risk of refugees from becoming involved in criminal activities" (Pakatan Harapan, 2018, p. 78), which

makes the assumption that refugees will at some point engage in crime. One issue with the promise that may raise questions for some refugees is that the groups specifically singled out (Rohingya and Syrian) are Muslim. The refugee population in Malaysia is multi-religious, so whether these groups are mentioned simply as they represent the most at-risk groups currently, or if there is indeed religious favouritism at play remains to be seen. Nevertheless, there are rumblings in the media that the government is to announce that refugees will be provided access to state schools and hospitals (Aiman, 2019; "Government to Consider," 2019). News reports and the Pakatan Harapan (2018) specifically mention Rohingya, Syrian and Palestinian groups, so time will tell if these new proposals will affect all refugees, or even when these new proposals will take place. Until then, refugees will continue as usual as they await news of any potential changes.

Urban Refugees

Refugees in urban areas have become the new normal (Addaney, 2017). With 90% of the world's asylum seekers living in cities and urban areas, Malaysia has an estimated 91,000 urban refugees with over 28,000 located in central Kuala Lumpur, and a further 62,000 in the neighbouring state of Selangor (UNHCR, 2018). Though there are hardships in refugee camps, there is, to a certain extent, access to food, water, shelter, and a level of protection within the confines of the camp. These things are largely unavailable to urban refugees who have to learn to be self-reliant (Campbell, 2006). Refugees are stretched out over large areas, and hidden, so providing services such as protection become logistically very challenging. This means urban refugees are exposed to exploitation, abuse, harassment, discrimination, forced repatriation, detention, and gender-based

violence, as well as human trafficking (Morand et al., 2012). In Malaysia, refugees are vulnerable to all of these threats. Azis (2014) reported that crimes against refugees in Malaysia go underreported with an account of one Rohingya man who managed to start a business and on the first day was attacked by a gangster. After recovering, the Rohingya man went to see the gangster and offered to pay him money so that it would not happen again and to protect him from future incidents. In instances such as this, the police cannot intervene as the man's illegal status puts him in jeopardy of being arrested himself. Azis (2014) noted that extortion cases like this are all too common, and the UNHCR in Malaysia is limited in what they can do. Although there are policies and frameworks to assist refugees in urban environments (see Morand et al., 2012; Obi & Crisp, 2001; UNHCR, 2004), their influence and scope are limited, leaving refugees no choice but to deal with problems themselves.

Refugees in Protracted Positions (RPP)

In addition to the dangers, difficulties, and hardships that come with living in a foreign land, refugees increasingly find themselves in protracted situations. The UNHCR (2017) estimates that there are over 13 million refugees in protracted situations around the world. Crawford, Cosgrave, Haysom, and Walicki (2015) discovered that conflicts that produce refugees are rarely ever resolved in less than three years, and the authors stated that if the conflict has not been resolved within six months, a refugee is likely to spend many years displaced. Refugees in Malaysia are no exception, with many years spent in the country before the process of resettlement is completed (Hoffstaedter, 2014; "The Long Wait," 2015; Low et al., 2014). Collyer (2007, 2010) called the protracted situation of refugees the

'fragmented journey.' Though refugees may spend many years in one country, it is not necessarily the final destination, and over the years, an individual may have to move to other locations before finding what can be considered home. Underscoring the protracted situation of refugees and their fragmented journey is what Dryden-Peterson (2017) called 'unknowable futures.' With no end in sight for many refugee children in protracted situations, the entirety of the school life is spent in the host nation (Dryden-Peterson, 2016), if access to education is available. The position of refugees as illegal immigrants in Malaysia, protracted displacement, fragmented journeys, and uncertainty all converge in Malaysia to present innumerable challenges that have to be overcome by families, children and their communities. Education is but one of these challenges. As stated by Dryden-Peterson (2016), "The underlying assumption of segregated education for refugees was a speedy return to a country of origin; but the reality of conflict was that displacement was protracted" (p. 478). Refugee education, therefore, needs to be considered as a long-term endeavour with the potential to last many years. The next section explores what educational opportunities are available for the few children that are able to access school in Malaysia.

Access to Education in Malaysia for Refugees

International agreements on access to education such as Article 22 of the 1951 UN convention or the Global Educational Strategy (GES) by the UNHCR (2012) call for nation-states to provide access to primary education or integrate refugees into the national system. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (United Nations, 2019), to which only the U.S., Somalia, and South Sudan are not signatories, all children have the right to education. This

includes refugee children as these rights are guaranteed to all under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 1994). International agreements and policy mean very little, though, when a country such as Malaysia views refugees as others, and therefore outside of these agreements. As it stands, Malaysia remains an almost unique eco-system, with displaced communities that use guerrilla-like tactics to provide education for their youth. As of 2014, according to the UNHCR in Malaysia, there are an estimated 124 registered learning centres with the UNHCR (O'Neal et al., 2016) that offer education to around 21,120 students aged 3–17. Of that number, 5,816 are between the ages of 3–5, and 9,540 are between 6-13, with 5,764 between the ages of 14-17. Of the 124 learning centres, around 120 offer primary education, with very few offering secondary schooling. Education for these children is available in the form of 'secret schools' (Razak, 2015), so named as the people who manage and the children who attend can face persecution or detention from the authorities if they are found out (Nathan, 2012). These schools are sometimes established by the refugee community (Ismail, 2010; Razak, 2015; UNHCR, 2011), and are limited to apartments, rooms, or rented spaces (Ismail, 2010; Low, Kok, & Lee, 2014; UNHCR, 2011). Much of the funding for these schools comes from the parents themselves who pay $5 or more per month (Ismail, 2010), or in the form of donations (Low, Kok & Lee, 2014; Razak, 2015). The income then pays for school materials, lunches, and salaries. Schools are staffed by members of the refugee community, as well as volunteers from Malaysia and other countries (Razak, 2015). Children and staff are left with limited resources such as school books and stationery, a large student to teacher ratio in classrooms, and limited training for teachers (UNHCR, 2011). The classes are often overcrowded, hot, and contain students of various ages from young to teenagers. In addition, these students have

vastly different backgrounds due to interrupted education (O'Neal et al., 2016). Many of the teachers come from the community itself and are paid from enrolment fees. The payment teachers receive is often no more than 600 ringgit (150 USD) per month, so when rent, utitlites and food are paid for this leaves little left over. Then, the provision for secondary education is such that when some children are of age they will drop out of school to find work to support their family, to get married, or to stay home to care for family members (O'Neal et al., 2016; Razak, 2015; UNHCR, 2011).

Table 2.1 contains the 122 learning centres that are registered in Malaysia. The centres are broken down into three distinct categories: 'Community Learning Centre' (CLC), which refers to centres that were established by the community; 'Implementing Partner,' which are centres established by Non-profit Organisations (NGO) or volunteers; and finally 'Operational Partners' who assist centres established by the community by providing support in terms of day-to-day running, fundraising, or teaching. This last category refers to centres that have participation by the community but rely on NGOs and volunteers to take on much of the management duties.

Total number of Schools -122.	**Community Learning Centre (CLC)**	**Implementing Partner (IP)**	**Operational Partner (OP)**
Number per type	76 (62%)	10 (8%)	35 (28%)
Individual type breakdown			
Single group	52.6%	50%	46%
Ethnically diverse Schools	47.3%	10%	61%

Mixed with other country	14%	40%	46%
Mixed with other religion	18%	20%	15%%
Overall breakdown			
Single Group	48%		
Mixed School	44%		
Mixed with other country	22%		
Mixed with other religion	19%		
1% error for missing information in data sample			

Table 2.1: Breakdown of the 122 registered learning centres in Malaysia

(Personal Communication, UNHCR Malaysia, 2016)

From the data, it is apparent that the majority of the centres, approximately 62%, have been established by representatives of the community, with 28% of the centres being managed by operational partners and 8% managed by implementing partners. The number of community-learning centres shows, to some extent, the agency that the communities are willing to show to provide education to their young. Interestingly, a closer look at the data shows how the centres are separated ethnically, geographically, or linguistically. Across all types of centres, around 50% of the schools are representative of a single group, albeit ethnic, geographic, or linguistic. The numbers, though, are a little misleading, as many of the groups are comprised of at least fourteen separate groups from Myanmar. When looking at all 122 centres, it can be seen that 48% of the centres represent a single group, with 44% of the centres representing those that have a combination of different groups. When examining the findings in more detail, it becomes clear that only 22% of the

122 schools combine groups from different countries, and only 19% of the total number of schools include groups of a different religion.

The data collected on the centres provides information which can be used to derive basic meaning and assumptions. Aside from the statistics presented in Table 2.1, the research that is currently available on these learning centres in a Malaysian setting is limited with much of the information above originating from newspaper articles or reports by the UNHCR, and a small number of peer-reviewed articles. These studies usually present short vignettes, so it remains unclear how the information was gathered, by whom, and what research design, if any, was used, and if ethical procedures were observed. In the limited number of studies examined, some offered a glimpse into the role that the learning centres play. In some cases, the centres offer a place of safety where the children are kept off the streets and away from any untoward influences that may lead them astray (O'Neal et al., 2016). Other studies alluded to the learning centres representing a place for social mobility, as parents see them as offering a better life or one that they may not have had (Low, Kok & Lee, 2014). For some communities, though, life in Malaysia does not represent permanency. The hardships they face in Malaysia are for a greater purpose as their time there is temporary, for they believe they will be resettled at some point in the future (Hoffstaedter, 2014).

The dearth of scholarly research conducted on refugee schools in Malaysia presents a significant research gap. Education is clearly vital, but so little is known about refugee education in Malaysia that no assumptions or hypotheses can be made. To gain more insight into refugee education, the following section explores research that has been conducted in other countries so as to build a better understanding of the role and function that education serves refugee groups.

Section 2

Non-formal Education (NfE)

Where state education is unavailable, parallel systems have been established to serve the needs of the many children who would otherwise have no access to education. Non-formal education is defined as education that is not directly provided by the nation-state but by communities themselves or NGOs. This is not a new phenomenon as, for many years, refugee communities have taken it upon themselves to provide opportunities for education where there were previously none (Dodds & Inquai, 1983; Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Sinclair, 2001). The following section explores NfE in a number of settings, from the provision of education for refugees in settler countries to the education that complements a state system. In all cases, it reflects the educational experiences of refugees and immigrants and identifies commonalities among the provision of education across these contrasting settings.

The dominant realm for refugee education was within camps, and was at its height between 1985-2011 when the UNHCR used camps to deliver education to a large number of people in a single and secure location (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). As times changed and the number of conflicts escalated, the nature of displacement followed suit, with more people seeking refuge in urban environments. Yet, in all settings, camp, urban, and even in countries of settlement, a social phenomenon emerged whereby schools sprung up to serve the needs of a community. While schools have been established by communities for years, the point of interest is that they often serve a community's specific linguistic, cultural, or religious requirements. One example is presented by Brown (2003), who studied Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and found that though confined within a camp, representatives

established a school whereby the norms and values of the homeland, as well as the ethnic language, Dzongkha, were passed on to the younger generation. Subsequent studies by Oh (2012) and Williams (2012) found that Karan refugees from Myanmar living in camps in Thailand resisted using the Thai curriculum in their school in favour of generating in-house content that was linguistically and culturally specific to the Karen people.

Language seems to feature consistently across the literature with groups who seek to retain their ethnic language in lands where it is not represented (Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010; Celik & Icduygu, 2018; Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Karanja, 2010; Keevallick, 2010; Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Phinney et al., 2000). Moreover, though not as extensively reported as language, faith has also been shown in a limited number of studies to motivate groups to find educational institutions in which their children can learn in a non-secular environment (Celik & Icduygu, 2018; Gogonas, 2011; Nagel & Staeheli, 2005). The research is still very preliminary, and concepts of language and faith mostly feature as footnotes or vignettes, which are overshadowed by a different focus of the paper. One study of Syrian refugees who attend state schools in Turkey expanded what is known on the impact of enroling children into schools that do not reflect their social group, the language they speak, the faith they follow, and the cultural aspects they have grown up with. Celik and Icduygu (2018) found that in this case children felt isolated in the school, and parents insisted the children leave and attend a school that catered more specifically to features associated with Syrian identities, such as language and culture.

What can be inferred from the literature reviewed is that for some refugee and minority groups language and faith seem to be salient, so much so that representatives from communities are willing to establish schools so that children

can be educated in keeping with the values, norms, and culture of the community they represent. The role and the exact function of school for refugees or minority groups requires further investigation in the literature. Nonetheless, a core feature of school that often appears is its function as a protective space (Buckner, Spencer & Cha, 2017; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Hart, 2009; Karanja, 2010; Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). This is especially salient in conflict zones or areas that are perceived to be high risk. In these cases, schools offer a safe haven away from the potential of physical harm, harassment, or exploitation. In addition to the school functioning as a place to mitigate physical dangers, studies have also found how schools provide safe environments for children to explore their ethnic identities (Creese, Bhatt, Bhojani, & Martin, 2006; Creese & Martin, 2006; Wei, 2006; Kwong, 2011; Mizra & Raey, 2000).

The scant amount of research on refugee schools means that studies conducted on complementary schools may provide theoretical insight that could potentially be applied to investigate refugee schools. Complementary schooling generally refers to schools that are operated outside of the state system by minority groups who have settled in a country (Strand, 2007). This form of schooling has prevailed in the U.K. for over 50 years with Afro-Carribean, North-African Muslim, Greek, Turkish, and Chinese communities (Wei, 2006). In studies conducted on Chinese and Gujarati schools in the U.K., the conclusion was that they function as a place to retain cultural aspects pertinent to identity such as language and culture (Archer et al., 2010; Creese et al., 2006; Francis et al., 2010). On the function of complementary schools there is general agreement that they are complex sites that are important for the "everyday re/production of identity and culture within diasporic communities" (Archer et al., 2010, p. 422), and are "key sites within the

ongoing (contested) construction of diasporic identities" (Francis, et al., 2010, p.115).

In the context of these studies, the schools, their students, and parents are dealing with the tension between ethnic identity and host identity, and the struggle to find a balance between the two. There are similarities to be found between refugee and complementary schools in that they both seek to ensure the continuance of an ethnic language and culture. This is done so in the context of a new environment or an environment that is different from the homeland. Studies that explore how groups and individuals react to change through intercultural contact is known as acculturation. It may be that complementary schools function as a means to combat acculturation forces. This concept is alluded to by one study on a complementary school in the U.K. According to Francis et al. (2010), "This social or 'community' function is not always a purely benign construction, but rather is in some responses imbued with a political function, namely to counter the 'threat' of 'Westernization'" (p. 108). Westernisation brings with it a number of connotations, but for complementary schools in the U.K., this may manifest in the form of the English language and British culture, which minority children are exposed to on a daily basis in schools. Intercultural contact in this sense is a powerful force that can impact language maintenance and loss (Cho, 2000; Cho, Cho & Tse, 1997; Clyne, 2003; Filmore, 1991, 2000; Fishman, 1964; Gal, 1979), as well as faith (Awad, 2010; Gungor, Fleischmann, Phalet, & Maliepaard, 2013; Saroglou & Mathijsen, 2007). Acculturation has not been used as a tool by which to investigate complementary schools, but it may prove a useful avenue for the exploration and further understanding of the role of complementary schools.

Non-formal education (NfE) is an instrument used by numerous communities around the world to provide access to education that is in keeping with how they conceptualise the preservation of their identity through schooling. In the case of refugee education, it provides a safe place away from the dangers of physical harm. Moreover, it provides a place where ethnic characteristics can be taught and passed on to the next generation. Research on complementary schools in the U.K. has explored how they are places for the reproduction of ethnic identities and their construction. Research in refugee schools has not yet made this connection as explicitly so this is one area that requires further enquiry. Finally, in all cases of refugee and complementary education, the links between the maintenance of ethnic culture and acculturation are indefinite and also require further investigation to explore the role of refugee schools in these processes.

Section 3

Introduction

From the literature thus far, several themes have begun to emerge, guiding a deeper review and discussion (Table 2.2). Emerging from the nation-state on non-formal education are themes that stress the need for identity maintenance and/or promotion through language, faith, and culture. Also, the role of schools as a protective space from physical harm and for the free expression of ethnic identity are also prominent themes. Lastly, the role of acculturation has not featured in the studies on refugee or complementary schools, yet research into this area may provide more insight into how intercultural change impacts the behaviour and decisions of refugee groups and the role of refugee schools. This aspect is of interest

as individuals in protracted situations spend years in exile in new countries, and the impact this has may demonstrate why language, faith, and culture are so integral.

Emergent Themes	Core Theme
Physical Protection (Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003; Hart, 2009; Karanja, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Buckner, Spencer & Cha, 2017)	**Protection**
Ethnic Safe Spaces (Mizra & Raey, 2000; Creese & Martin, 2006; Creese et al., 2006; Wei, 2006; Kwong, 2011)	
Language Maintenance (Phinney et al., 2000; Brown 2003; Oh, 2012; Williams, 2012;; Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Creese et al., 2006; Karanja, 2010; Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010;Francis, et al., 2010; Archer et al., 2010; Keevalick, 2010; Celik & Icduygu, 2018)	**Identity**
Religious Maintenance (Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Gogonas, 2011; Celik & Icduygu, 2018)	
Cultural Maintenance (Francis, et al., 2010; Archer et al., 2010; Celik & Icduygu 2018)	
Identity (Archer et al., 2010; Francis, et al., 2010)	
Acculturation (Fishman, 1964; Filmore, 1991, 2000; Cho, Cho & Tse, 1997; Gal, 1997; Cho, 2000; Clyne, 2003; Saroglou & Mathijsen, 2007; Francis et al., 2010; Awad, 2010; Gungor et al., 2013)	**Acculturation**

Table 2.2: Emergent Themes

The themes that emerged from section 2 and are presented in Table 2.2 are condensed into three areas: protection, identity, and acculturation. The aim of this is to further explore the connections between these areas and how they pertain to

refugee schools. Protection delves deeper into the protective role of schools and the frameworks that have been developed for this purpose. It explores how the protective function of the school is multifaceted, but also examines areas that require further research. The next area is placed under the title of identity. This explores a number of complex themes that include language, religion, and culture. The latter of which is as Benhabib (2002) states is "… a ubiquitous synonym for identity, an identity marker and differentiator" (p.1). By reviewing the literature on these areas and their importance for identity construction,

If these areas are seen to be crucial for identity construction, this may explain why they feature so heavily in non-formal education.

The last area, acculturation, takes what was learned in the previous section on identity and applies it to the larger social world. As refugees spend years in exile, this section explores what effect this could have on daily behaviour, language, and faith, and explores what role refugee schools play in the acculturation process through the promotion of these ethnic attributes.

Protection

International law for the provision of protection of refugees is complex, and even more so when children are considered. Bhabha (2004) argues that "Children are treated differently rather than equally" (p.143), with threats aimed specifically at children often ignored. In Malaysia, where refugees are not protected by international law, safety and security are daily concerns. Without rights and access to legal recourse, refugees are susceptible to arrest, detention, and are especially vulnerable from criminals who can exploit their weaknesses and marginalised

position. The main drivers in refugee protection on the international stage come from the UNHCR, which had focused predominantly on policy and programmes for camp-based refugees from 1985-2011 (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Many of the frameworks available on protection focused on refugees in these camps and how to address protection in immediate terms (Nicolai & Tripplehorn, 2003; Sinclair, 2001). The urbanisation of refugees, however, makes their protection more complicated as individuals are spread out over vast areas and hidden away, so they are not easily detected. Yet, even frameworks that are specifically targeted to assist urban refugees (see Morand et al., 2012; Obi & Crisp, 2001) require cooperation with the government of the host nation. This has had limited effect in Malaysia as the government's stance is that refugees are illegal immigrants and thus do not fall under any protection convention or mandate. The result is that refugee groups must be self-sufficient—look after their own interests and devise ways and means for protection.

There is a multitude of risks that refugees must face: "…arrest and detention, refoulement, harassment, exploitation, discrimination, vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), HIV-AIDS, human smuggling and trafficking" (Morand et al., 2012, p.7). These threats are experienced by refugees in countries that are signatories to the refugee convention (Addaney, 2017), so in countries like Malaysia, these threats increase ten-fold, as a refugee who is a victim of crime cannot report it for fear of being arrested themselves. Refugees have to live in fear, suffer, and endure constant threats to their physical and mental well-being. Some of the emotional consequences of these dangers are stress (Oxfam, 2016) and negative emotions (Williams & Berry, 1991), with studies reporting refugees are 10 times more likely to suffer from PTSD (Fazel, Wheeler & Danesh, 2005).

If a refugee is detained by the authorities or falls victim to a crime, the only sources of solace or assistance are the UNHCR or the communities to which they belong. Other than that, the main tools that refugee utilise to protect themselves in urban environments are invisibility (Alzoubi, Al Smadi, & Gougazeh, 2017; El-Shaarawi, 2015; Grabska, 2006; Sommers, 2001) and avoidance (Alzoubi et al., 2017), as the busy streets provide cover and a place to hide for those who are deemed illegal (Grabska, 2006). Even with these strategies, safety is not guaranteed, and if there are children involved, the dangers and risks become more imminent. Due to their position in a country with limited contacts and few opportunities to find well-paying work, refugees are often forced into poverty (Morand et al., 2012). The challenge then befalls the parent to make money to cover daily necessities, such as food and transport, bills, rent, all of which is needed to pay the agents who enabled them to enter the country. Debts mount up and parents are left with the issue of who takes care of the children while the parent is away working to make the money that they need.

This dilemma is where research has found that refugee schools play a significant role. Bellino and Dryden-Peterson (2018) found that for Somali refugees who lived outside of camps and in urban environments, safety was an immediate concern, but secondary boarding schools served as a protective shield. Schools are crucial as protective spaces, as a number of studies have found (Avery & Said, 2017; Bellino & Dryden-Peterson, 2018; Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Karanja, 2010; Kelley et al., 2004; UNHCR, 2004; Zeus, 2011). The protective measures provided by schools has been conceptualised into three areas by Nicolai and Tripplehorn (2003): physical, psychological, and cognitive.

- *Physical Protection* - This promotes a safe place to learn and play under the supervision of teachers. Here children have alternatives to joining gangs or Militias, they can learn about health and hygiene, and they can prepare for work in a secure environment.
- *Psychosocial Protection* - This provides an identity to children to which those who are not in school may not have. It promotes social interaction and integration of children who may have suffered trauma. It is a place for social interaction for the children and their families with the larger community and provides a daily routine.
- *Cognitive protection* - This promotes the development of literacy and numeracy. It helps children to gain an understanding of human rights and a way to respond to propaganda by analysing information and giving their opinions. (p. 10)

A child may be safe from physical harm while inside the school, but studies have highlighted the emotional stress that refugees endure and schools are a safe space that can assist with mental well-being (Kelley et al., 2004; Zeus, 2011). The framework for protection suggested by Nicolai and Tripplehorn (2003) worked on a functional basis. It was developed for a time when refugee camps were common, and frameworks needed to be practical and used in the field. A study by Karanja (2010) corroborated the protective function of schools; however, the author added one point that begs further enquiry: “The students expressed a sense of safety in being among other students, and some teachers, with whom they shared the same culture and language” (Karanja, 2010, p. 150).

Protection and safety are often conceptualised in terms of the body and the mind, but Karanja (2010) has demonstrated, albeit in a short vignette, that

familiarity with people from the same background also constitutes to a sense of safety, such as the ethnic safe spaces presented in Table 2.2 (Creese et al., 2006; Creese & Martin, 2006; Kwong, 2011; Mizra & Raey, 2000; Wei, 2006). More research is required to investigate protection as a multidimensional process from the perspective of the person who is experiencing danger. Doing so may open up new areas of enquiry in terms of how to construct safe spaces or improve and update current practices.

Frameworks and guidelines exist for the provision and protection of refugees (Morand et al., 2012; Nicolai & Tripplehorn, 2003; Sinclair, 2001). These aim to monitor, structure, and develop protection, but do not necessarily provide theoretical insight that may lead to new concepts in safety and protection. What is evident is that the prevention of risks is imperative, and refugees in protracted positions, for the most part, must be self-reliant and manage risks themselves. So, what is needed is to understand protection from the perspective of the refugees who must face it on a daily basis and not the people who provide it. One theory which has consolidated much of the research on intergroup relations provides a model to study how in-groups react to threats. The integrated threat theory of prejudice (ITTP) (Stephan & Stephan, 2013) incorporates 4 threats, realistic, symbolic, in-group anxiety, and negative stereotypes, to predict prejudice, which is the underlying core aim of the model. Studies that have incorporated this model have led to the claim that when an in-group identify strongly, individuals in that group are likely to respond to threats with prejudice. contact that is positive with the group that poses a threat may reduce prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 2013). The model has been used in studies to explore in-groups, which are often the dominant group of the country, and the threats they associate with people in the out-group, which are often refugee

or immigrant groups. The aim of this is to understand which threats lead to prejudice so that intergroup relations can be improved with dialogue programmes or cultural diversity training.

Using ITTP with refugee groups may provide the insight needed to push theory forward in order to identify how refugees understand and perceive threats, and how refugee schools manage them while in protracted positions in host nations. Contrasting this, ITTP could be used to explore the perceptions of how the host nation perceives refugees, which could then be used to identify possible relationships. The outcome of this could provide valuable insight into which threats are prominent in certain situations and how these threats are perceived by specific groups. These findings could then be analysed alongside existing refugee frameworks for their enhancement or development. The ITTP, for example, could be used to explore Karanja's (2010) finding on the significance of cultural familiarity providing a sense of safety. Under ITTP a person's culture can be investigated to explore the impact on it when faced with threats. This way protection can be conceptualised as a multidimensional process, which could lead to findings on how schools manage these risks.

Identity

The literature on informal education from camp-based and complementary schools hinted at the part that language plays in the role and function of education in these environments. Faith does not feature heavily in the literature; however, in the analysis of data from the UNHCR on refugee schools (see section 1) in Malaysia, there was a correlation between faith and segregation between groups. The rationale for the maintenance or protectionism over faith, language, and culture could be

explained by how refugees self-identify while in a host nation to which they have no attachment. This is made apparent by Hoffsteader (2014), who used the concept of non-places (Augé, 1995, p. 77-78) to research place-making for Myanmar Chin people and concluded that "Malaysia as a whole may be described as a liminal 'non-place' for refugees, as it is a space for them that can be defined as neither 'relational, or historical, or concerned with [their] identity" (p. 877). Consequently, a number of questions remain, such as how refugees in protracted situations identify, whether language, faith, and culture of the homeland still play a significant role in the construction of identity while in a host nation, and the role that refugees schools play, if any, in the maintenance of language, faith and culture. These questions are explored in relation to the literature in the following discussion, beginning with an overview of identity and followed by a review of the literature of faith and language in relation to refugee and immigrant groups.

According to Howard-Hassmann (1995) "Group identification remains an extremely important part of most people's physological makeup". Yet, identity is highly complex, and there is no agreed-upon single definition (Phinney, 1990), although there have been attempts to conceptualise it. The first is offered by Erikson (1964), who stated, "… [T]rue identity depends on the support which the young receive from the collective sense of identity which social groups assign to them, their class, their nationality, their culture" (p. 93), while Tajfel (1981) suggested that identity is: "… [P]art of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 255). Identity is conceptualised around a number of facets from culture, nationality, values, emotions, and in all instances the social group is essential as an agent of identity

transmission. Carrol, Motha, and Price (2008) asserted that "[i]dentity has come to be widely understood as socially constructed within both interpersonal relationships and larger sociocultural structures formed through institutions and ideologies" (p. 166). Identity is, therefore, fluid as its construction can be shaped and influenced by social forces and the social groups to which the individual belongs (Haddad, 1994; Nagel, 1995; McMullen, 2000).

Given that identity is socially constructed, fluid, and thus susceptible to change, it would seem that schools as the dominant institution outside the family could influence how identity is constructed. Schools are important sites of socialisation, and from the early years of school racial and ethnic self-awareness emerges (Carter, 2006). Researchers have explored the impact this social world has, and there is agreement that school influences identity construction both positively and negatively (Carter, 2006; Carter & Goodwin, 1994; DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Gay, 1978; Locke, 1996). Citing Katz (1982) and Gay (1978), Carter & Goodwin (1994) posited that a child would enter a school reflecting the identity of the parent, then in the later years develop their own sense of identity. An example of the impact of school on identity can be found with studies on Black Racial Identity (BRI) in American schools. The negative way in which this happens is black teachers are not represented in the teaching staff (Grantham & Ford, 1998), teachers have different expectations for minority groups (Carter & Goodwin, 1994), the school curricular does not reflect black culture (Ladson-Billings, 2000), and teachers are not aware of student cultural needs (Gay, 1999).

These issues plus relationships with peers all impact a sense of identity with black students (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009). Despite the negatives, research shows this is not the same for all ethnic groups (Ogbu, 1983), and for the students who identify

positively with the school, they can be academically successful (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009). Still, the school is central to this, and it is up to teachers to espouse positive attitudes and the curricular to promote a positive view of racial identity (Harry et al., 2008). The findings are very contextual and rooted in the racial history of the country the studies take place. What is important to note is that schools are not impartial social spaces; the curriculum, teachers, ethnic background of the dominant group, and how minority groups are perceived, accepted, and treated within the school all impact how identity is constructed. This might explain why refugee schools are so valuable for refugee communities, and may potentially explain why parents want their children educated in schools that function to maintain ethnic heritage.

From this very brief and broad overview of identity and the impact of school on identity, there are a few takeaways that guide the rest of this section. First, the construction and formation of identity can be influenced by societal and institutional factors, such as school, as well as group membership. Second, identity can be transferred through various aspects, which include but are not limited to culture, values, and class. For the purpose of the following section, identity in schools is explored through channels that transmit it such as faith and language. This analysis provides further evidence as to why these aspects may feature so heavily in non-formal education.

Religion & Religious Institutions

Faith is indistinguishable from identity (Kim, 2011), and faith and its respective institutions both play significant roles in its construction (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007) and its maintenance and promotion (Chong, 1998; Gungor et al.,

2013; Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003; Kim, 2011; Min, 1992; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001). The role of religion in the construction of identity has received little attention in the literature (Peek, 2005). In addressing the link between ethnic identity and religion, there is no clear evidence to suggest which one holds greater significance or influence (Williams, 1988), as some communities stress their religious identity, while others emphasise their ethnic one (Yang & Ebaugh, 2001). What is known is that both are connected, and upon a refugee's arrival in a host nation, religious institutions are often established to serve their respective communities (Kim, 2011). In researching ethnic Fuzhounese communities in Chinatown in New York City, Guest (2003) found that "[r]eligious communities are central as sites for constructing and reconstructing networks of ethnic solidarity and accessing available financial and social capital" (p. 43).

In gathering community members together into a congregation, the church was able to promote social cohesion, which according to Forrest and Kearns (2001), is attributed to communities coming together in order to achieve a common goal. This provides a sense of belonging and value to an individual who has arrived in an unfamiliar land (Kim, 2011). To illustrate the significance of faith and the institution, Worland and Darlington (2010) conducted a study with Christian, Karen people from Myanmar who had resettled in Australia. The study found that the Karen preserve a strong sense of faith as well as language, community, culture, and identity. The group was ultimately able to integrate into the surrounding society while retaining their own sense of identity.

The findings from the studies presented raise some interesting questions for the role of faith in non-formal education. These studies have looked at faith and their religious institutions in isolation, so there is no real insight into the role of

faith in refugee schools. What is more, if religious institutions are vessels for ethnic identity transmission, it is possible that refugee schools replicate this function. More research is required to understand how refugee schools approach religion, either from a secular or non-secular position and in the case of the latter, how faith is transmitted and integrated into the school setting. What is evident from the literature is that faith is interconnected with identity, and religious institutions are instrumental in maintaining and promoting aspects connected to identity. What the literature avoids is any connection between faith and school. This may be due to the secularisation in countries of settlement where school and faith are mutually exclusive, or simply down to the focus of the study. This leaves a sizeable gap in the literature as research is required to explore how faith is integrated into refugee schools.

Language

Among the research on informal education and schooling, language emerged as a salient theme in the literature. What is noticeably lacking, though, is any explanation or rationale as to why ethnic language consistently remained a central focus in schools. Research on language has found that it is inextricably connected to notions of identity (Sachdev, 1995; Smolicz, 1981, 1992; Smolicz et al., 2001; UNHCR, 2004). It contributes to individual identity, as well as the construction of group identity (May, 2003; Tannenbaum, 2005) to the point where Sachdev (1995) argued that "… language use and identity appear to be related reciprocally: language use influences the formation of group identity and group identity influences patterns of language attitudes and usage" (p. 42). The development of language within a group becomes a criterion for group membership

(Carvallaro, 2005; Fishman, 1977), and without the ability to converse in the language an individual would not feel a sense of belonging to that group (Lambert, 1980). As a symbol of ethnic and group identity (Smolicz, 1981, 1992; Smolicz et al., 2001), Carvallaro (2005) posited that language loss symbolises the loss of identity. This has been disputed, though. In a discussion on the subject, May (2003) questioned Eastman (1984) and Edwards (1984, 1985), who claimed that identity and language are not interconnected, and the latter could be substituted without any impact on identity.

Research that looks specifically at minority groups and refugees alludes to a connection between language and identity (Francis et al., 2010; Nagel & Staeheli, 2005), especially where adolescents are concerned (Phinney et al., 2000). Language has been found to provide a connection between the younger and older generation (Francis et al., 2010; Keevallik, 2010), to provide a connection to the homeland (Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Francis et al., 2010), and to function as an identity marker (Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Francis et al., 2010). Whatever the connection is between language and identity, what is evident is that communities seek to ensure their language is maintained, as Table 2.3 illustrates.

Country of origin	Language of community	Language of host country	Language of choice in learning centre	Citation
Displaced commutes without access to state education				
Democratic Republic of Congo	French	English (Uganda)	French	Dryden-Peterson (2006)
Bhutan	Dzongkha	Nepalese	Dzongkha & English	Brown (2003)
Myanmar (Karen)	Karen Dialect / Burmese	Thai	Karen & English	Oh (2012) Williams (2012)

Sudan	Arabic / English	English (Kenya)	Kiswahili / English / Arabic	Karanja (2010)
Complementary school system				
China / Hong Kong	English / Chinese	English (U.K.)	Chinese	Francis, Archer & Mau (2010)
Estonia	Swedish / Estonian	Swedish	Estonian	Keevalick (2010)
Middle East	English / Arabic	English (U.S.A)	Arabic	Nagel & Staeheli (2005)
Armenia	English / Armanian	English (U.S.A)	Armenian	Phinney et al. (2000)

Table 2.3: Language use in learning centres by displaced communities

Dryden-Peterson (2006) noted that refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) decided as a community to educate their children in the native language of their country (French), and not in the language of the country in which they sought refuge (English). This decision was based, it seems, on the idea that if they were ever repatriated to their home country, they would be able to continue their education in their first language. This may not be a unique phenomenon as displaced communities from a number of countries choose their language rather than the language of the host country in which to educate their young, as Table 2.3 shows.

The correlations between communities living in countries where the dominant language is not their own or does not represent their cultural background are evident in Table 2.3. While Francis et al. (2010) alluded to the notion of language as an identity marker, a communication tool with family members, and an instrument for possible future employment, many other studies do not address the apparent need that communities have in preserving their linguistic identity. Nagel and Staeheli (2005) investigated Arab-Americans and discussed how the community tackles the pressure to assimilate into American life by maintaining

their culture. Linguistic proficiency could be one method that this community uses to avoid full assimilation. As languages are passed down from older generations, encouraging later generations to learn the language of their community may, in fact, be a way to promote a sense of pride for their community (Yok-Fong & Pellebon, 2012). But it may simply be a method for intergenerational communication, as language barriers have been seen to cause people to remain closer to communities who share their own language (Colic-Pelsker & Walker, 2003). For older generations, such as Arab-Americans and British-Chinese, who may not speak the language of the country, encouraging younger generations to learn their language would enable communication between both generations (Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010), as well as provide a method for them to speak English through their young. In this, language may represent a form of cultural identity and a practical solution for day-to-day living.

The complexities of identity and its involvement with language are apparent. Yet, questions remain as to why communities retain their language, and in the case of the dissertation, what role and function the refugee schools play in language retention and how this is achieved in the school. For the communities highlighted in Table 2.3, language is not just a tool for communication, and the literature points to a whole host of reasons to explain its significance. What is missing, though, is a detailed investigation of refugee schools and how community linguistic aspirations are manifested through education and schooling.

Researching Identity

To study identity, there are a number of theoretical frameworks available that provide researchers with conceptualisations to approach research in this field.

The first, Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), was "developed with the purpose of understanding how individuals make sense of themselves and other people in the social environment" (Korte, 2007, p. 168). Though a vast amount of research has been conducted using SIT, it is predominately used in the area of psychology and uses instruments to measure and predict intergroup behaviour. Therefore, a study that aims to investigate the significance of language and faith in the construction of identity through an institution, such as a school, may be required to seek a theoretical framework that explores identity as a multi-dimensional concept.

Identity is dynamic and influenced by time and space (Phinney, 1990). So, exploring refugee identity is a daunting challenge, made that much more difficult when an individual is in a protracted position and may have lived in many different places, or interacted with numerous groups over a long period of time. This means that investigating identity, or the significance of faith and language in identity, requires a different approach. One concept is Imagined Communities (ICs). This was first suggested by Anderson (1983). According to this theory, the nation is a social construct held together and developed in the beginning by print-media to deliver a shared message and understanding of the social group to which each person belongs.

The ideas that surround imagined communities have since been adapted and adopted by Norton (2001), who has reconceptualised imagined communities for the classroom to explore the non-participation of students. Building on the work of Anderson (1983) and Norton (2001), as well as Lave and Wenger (1991), Kanno (2003) explored the collective vision that schools have for the type of imagined community a student will enter. Kanno (2003) argued that "schools do not merely

reflect societal visions and pass them onto children. They sometimes act as an agency that challenges societal visions that oppress certain groups of people," and added that "[a] school's vision, thus, can not only reflect social ideologies but also strive to subvert dominant ideologies by imagining an alternative future society for its children and by socializing them into that imagined community" (p. 288). Using this conceptualisation, Kanno (2003) studied four schools in Japan, each catering to different bilingual groups. In all cases the schools envisioned a different imagined community for their students, with some emphasising close ties with Japan and the others transnational ties with the homeland. Using imagined communities and Kanno's (2003) reworking of the theory could allow for research to be conducted on refugee schools as it provides a framework for looking at the collective goals of the school through the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators who represent their respective communities.

Using social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) would provide insight into how a child identifies with and behaves in relation to those in the social group. Nevertheless, this would provide a micro-level view where a broader investigation of the school and those associated with it is required. A meso-level view of a refugee school is required so that multiple areas can be explored to identify how language and faith are incorporated in the school and for what purposes. This is only part of the picture, though. A study would need to examine which learning materials are used, what the children wear, and who the students interact with, such as the teachers, to provide a full picture of the imagined community that is envisioned. Using the theory of imagined communities would allow for a multidimensional investigation as to how these aspects construct the imagined community, and how it is envisioned by the school

The previous sections explored the salience of protection and identity, but they did not address how these have changed or were influenced by the social environment. Given that refugees in protracted situations can live in exile for many years, does this impact how the schools approach protections or influence how the imagined communities are envisioned? The next section investigates these possibilities.

Acculturation

Refugees in protracted situations, such as those in Malaysia, could potentially spend multiple years in the country before ever being repatriated or resettled (Hoffstaedter, 2014; "The Long Wait," 2015; Low et al., 2014). Their 'fragmented journeys' (Collyer, 2007, 2010) and 'unknowable futures' (Dryden-Peterson, 2017) mean refugees have to conceptualise time spent in Malaysia, the space they inhabit, and the social groups to which they belong. As noted in the previous section, identity is important for a sense of belonging and group membership, so when years are spent in a foreign land, identity construction and preservation could be adversely influenced by sociocultural structures. The process by which individuals experience psychological and cultural change during intercultural associations is referred to as acculturation (Berry, 2003). Much of the focus is on non-dominant groups, such as immigrants or refugees, and how they adapt to the dominant societies in which they reside (Berry, 2001). Areas of enquiry investigate the gradual process of how the language, values, and culture of the host society is acquired by these groups (Mesch, 2002).

From this, research can ascertain to what extent an individual has retained their heritage and identity (Sam & Berry, 2010). One of the dominant theories in

acculturation is Berry's (1997) two-dimensional acculturation model, which consists of four strategies: assimilation, separation, marginalisation, and integration. Studies that have been conducted suggest that of the four strategies, integration is the preferred option for immigrants and refugees (Berry, 1997). Nevertheless, Ager and Strang (2008), citing Castles, Korman, Vasta, and Vertovec (2001), stated that there is no model of refugee integration that is universally accepted, although integration is a policy goal for many agencies that work with refugees (European Commission, 2004; Frattini, 2006; HMG, 2007; Scottish Executive, 2006; USEU, 2007; Welsh Assembly Government, 2006).

As influential as Berry's (1997) model has been, it is not without criticism. Smith and Khawaja (2011), and Bartlett et al. (2017) argued that too few qualitative studies in the form of ethnographic research had been conducted. Research is needed to understand the context and lived experiences of the participants to provide a whole picture of the acculturation process by investigating the characteristics of the group, their home country, language proficiency of the host nation, and knowledge of the area in which the group settles (Schwartz et al., 2010). The last limitation of the model is the unidimensional approach that is taken where studies focus on a specific outcome or hypothesis. This has led to calls to view acculturation as a multidimensional process with research that includes language, identity, and attitudes (Schwartz et al., 2010; Trickett & Birman, 2005). In regard to this final point, the following sections explore the impact of school on acculturation, followed by how acculturation affects daily habits, faith, and language.

Impact of School on Acculturation

This section explores the broad influence that school institutions have on the acculturation process. With little research conducted on the acculturation experiences of individuals in refugee schools, research conducted mainly in the U.S., U.K., and Australia provides a point of contrast. Broadly speaking, the impact on school in the process of acculturation is evident in the literature. Trickett and Birman (2005) and Phinney (2001b) explained that school is where children first come face-to-face with American culture. It is through interaction with individuals from the host nation that refugee and immigrant children can make friends and build relationships that aid integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). One downside of this is that the language and culture of the child are at risk during integration. In one study, Nieri (2012) found that a school with a large number of linguistically acculturated students shaped individual linguistic acculturation. This means a refugee child in a school where their language is disproportionately represented could lose their ethnic language as they shift to the dominant form of discourse. Cassity and Gow (2005) researched the experiences of South Sudanese refugees in high schools in Australia and found a greater influence was made on forming relationships with individuals who spoke the same language to introduce the newcomers to the conventions of school. The need for familiarity is corroborated by Brown et al. (2006) who found that students seek support from those from the same country, and de Heer, Due, Riggs, and Augoustinos (2016) who found that children seek people with the same language and culture to form friendships when in a new environment.

As the dominant institution outside of the family (Schneider, Stevenson, & Coleman, 1993), school plays a crucial role in the lives of children. School can be a place where a refugee can integrate into a new society, but the impact of this integration is vast. Schools are often unprepared to deal with immigrant needs (Kia-

Keating & Ellis, 2007; Lowenhaupt & Reeves, 2015), and teachers may have a negative impact on these students if they do not have an understanding of their backgrounds (McBrien, 2005). Filmore (2000) warned of the issues that may arise when children are assimilated into schools as they try to retain aspects of their ethnic identity. Phinney et al. (2001b) also cautioned against hastily acculturating a child to the culture of the host nation, as the impact on the ethnic language may cause the child to feel alienated. The conclusions that can be gained from this overview of the literature are that school, social experiences, intercultural and interpersonal communication, the languages used, and the relationships that are formed in school have an impact on the child. As a coping strategy, children look for others who share familiar cultural traits in order to ease the acculturation process, and the language that is dominant in the school has the potential to replace the ethnic language. As previously mentioned, the studies referred to were conducted in countries of settlement where refugees have come to the end of their fragmented journey, yet a number of acculturation issues still persist. The role of school for children in protracted situations and its impact on acculturation has yet to be investigated in the literature. This leaves a significant research gap and one that needs to be explored.

Acculturation Attitudes - Behaviour, Faith, & Language

The process of acculturation is not contained within a vacuum (Massey & Mullan, 1984). The acquisition of language, culture, values, and norms from dominant cultures is acquired through institutions, media, and interpersonal contact with people (Mesch, 2002). Individuals, groups, and children are susceptible to acculturation forces (Sam & Berry, 2010), which means the longer a refugee spends

in a protracted situation, the greater the effect of acculturation. Thus, turning to the literature provides an overview of how acculturation changes, influences, and impacts behaviour, faith, and culture, which can then be used to investigate the impact of acculturation on those in refugee schools.

Behavioural Acculturation

Clothing change or adaption is the most visible representation of behavioural acculturation. Adapting to the clothing of the host nation is a strategy that provides an individual with a method in which to integrate into the new environment and avoid being noticed (Gbadamosi, 2012; Jo & Ha, 2018). Nonetheless, some individuals and groups may retain values and behaviours (such as aspects of ethnic dress) just as much as some might choose to adapt to those of the host nation (Khairullah et al., 1996). One study conducted in the U.K. with black African women found that clothing acculturation was dependent on a number of factors, and this affected the extent to which the women would change their clothing preference. To aid integration and to feel comfortable, the study found that in certain social situations that included a high number of local people or individuals who had acculturated to the member society, the women in the study chose to wear U.K. style clothing. Conversely, in situations such as special ceremonies where the women were around people of the same or similar background, clothing that reflected the women's ethnic heritage was favoured.

Although social environments and audience dictated to some extent clothing choice, religious importance superseded adaption to the clothing of the host nation. One example offered by the authors was that some of the women were Muslim and would not choose to wear trousers as they felt it would accentuate their curves, and

thus would be considered to be too revealing. What is noteworthy in the dissertation is the willingness for the women to adapt their clothing for certain social situations, but this was done so in line with their religious beliefs, meaning that although a level of acculturation was present, there is a limit to the extent that it impacts on religious or cultural beliefs. In terms of Berry's model (1997), this would be considered integration rather than full assimilation, as the women still hold on to ethnic cultural traits while adapting their clothing style to suit the host nation. In another study on Hispanic women in the U.S. the researcher found that clothing usage among women at various stages of acculturation was, in accordance with Berry's model, indicative of separation (Inglessis, 2008). The women favoured the retention of their ethnic culture and heritage through their clothing. Clothing discerns age, social and marital status, and occupation (Barthes, 1983), but additionally it demonstrates ethnic heritage and allegiance. Moreover, clothing can be used as a tool to create social boundaries between other groups (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), which builds into concepts of acculturation strategies and how the individual or groups seeks to interact with those perceived to be in the out-group.

Looking at visible representations of acculturation may inform research of how a group is adapting to a new environment. This line of enquiry could also be adapted for refugee schools, where a researcher would be able to observe what clothes are worn and what, if any, attachment there is to ethnic identity. There is no research currently available on this to use as a point of contrast, though. A further discussion on this area is found in Chapter 6.

Religious Acculturation

One area that can be affected by the process of acculturation, but is much less visible, aside from religious items that are worn, is religion. Within the literature on acculturation, religion has received much less attention than other areas (Saroglou & Mathijsen, 2007). This is unusual considering the close connection between religion and identity, and how it informs ethnic maintenance and promotion (Burris, Branscombe, & Jackson, 2000; Cadge & Ecklund, 2007; Chong, 1998; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003; Kim, 2011; Min, 1992; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001). The acculturation process can impact the transmission of religious identity (Gungor et al., 2013). An example of this was found in a study of Muslim immigrants in Belgium that discovered that for participants with a strong attachment to their religion, it was difficult for them to find a sense of belonging in the country. This was a challenge for integrating into the host society, as the participants identified more with the country of origin, and thus a strategy of separation ensued (Saroglou & Mathijsen, 2007). The tension between an individual's religious identity and the host society is made more apparent when the person's religion is not represented by the majority. For example, Awad (2010) explored how a group of Arab Muslim and Middle Eastern Christians perceived discrimination. For the Arab group, it was more profound as the Judeo-Christian values so dominant in America were at odds with the values of the Muslim participants. They, therefore, perceived higher levels of discrimination than the Christian group.

The role of faith in acculturation is certainly one that requires more scholarly research. Studies have explored the role of religious institutions in either preserving ethnic identity (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000) or as vessels to prepare those to enter the new society (Russo, 1969). In the case of

refugee schools, research needs to explore if religion is impacted by acculturation, or if the schools are able to retain a religious identity.

Linguistic Acculturation

There is a considerable amount of scholarly research on acculturation with language positioned firmly at the forefront (Zane & Mak, 2003). Linguistic acculturation is used by researchers to investigate the extent to which an individual has lost or retained their language. For example, a person who favours speaking in the language of the host nation over their own ethnic language would be deemed to have assimilated more fully into society, as opposed to a person who favours their ethnic language over the language of the host nation. This person would be viewed as separating from the society in which they live. Language is an incredibly contentious issue with successive governments in the U.K. stating that immigrants should learn English (Watt, 2011), and more recently, a government representative making a case for a deadline to be set for all immigrants in the country to speak English with the rationale that it aids integration (Dalton, 2018). The problem with this kind of rhetoric is that it contravenes a number of international legally binding conventions on the rights of the child to which the U.K. is a party to. Article 30 of the convention on the rights of the child explains,

> In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language. (United Nations, 2019)

Even with Article 30, researchers in linguistic acculturation have found that few groups can retain their ethnic languages due to the dominance of the host nation's language (Filmore, 2000), which over time and without preventative measures can erode ethnic languages.

Discussions about the retention and loss of language have been conceptualised into language maintenance and shift (Fishman, 1964). The latter refers to the process by which an individual gradually reduces their L1 usage and shifts to the language of the host nation (Clyne, 2003; Gal, 1979), the effects of which have been found to be especially detrimental for speakers of minority languages (Cho, 2000; Cho, Cho & Tse, 1997). The concern this raises is due to the interconnectedness between language and identity (Carvallaro, 2005; Cho, Cho & Tse, 1997; Hatoss & Sheely, 2009; May, 2003; Sachdev, 1995; Smolicz, 1981, 1992; Smolicz et al., 2001; Tannenbaum, 2005). The harm caused by language shift has been raised by Filmore (1991), who has studied the impact of English on minority languages in the U.S. The findings suggest that the earlier a child learns English, the greater the effect on language usage in the home. The author (Filmore, 1991) noted that the forces of assimilation are ever-present from entertainment media to the language used in the classroom. Citing the work of Lambert (1977), Filmore (2000) discussed the subtractive process of English in that given its dominance; it slowly erodes languages that are less prominent. For refugee schools in Malaysia, the language of the host nation, Malay, may be perceived to have the same subtractive effects. There is no literature available on the subtractive effect that dominant languages have on refugees in protracted situations; however, a discussion on the impact of Malay on one refugee group in the dissertation is explored in Chapter 6.

Maintaining a language is often seen as the role of the family (Canagarajah, 2008; Fishman, 1964, 2013; Filmore, 1991, 2000). Religious institutions play a role, but as the dominant force in the life of a child, family is the one influence that can ensure this occurs (Trickett & Birman, 2005). Outside of the family, school is the dominant and influential force, and Filmore (2000) argued that language loss in children begins with the realisation that the dominant language used in the school is not their own. Children care about belonging and acceptance, so acquiring the language of the school and the host nation is a tool by which to achieve that (Filmore, 1991). Language raises social identity questions on the subject of which group the person belongs. At a young and confusing time, a child must navigate these complex personal and social constructs, all the while finding a place in their new world and attempting to retain the world of their parents.

Ultimately, the language spoken at home suffers, and gradually the child's primary language, in many instances, becomes that of the host nation. This again may go some way to explain why the communities in Table 2.3 desire to retain their ethnic language and use schools as a means by which to ensure its survival. Even so, numerous studies have reported that interventions by families and schools are not sufficient as language shift is a force too powerful to be stopped (Canagarajah, 2008; Hatoss & Sheely, 2009; Jagodic, 2011; Lee, 2002; Zhang & Slaughter-Defore, 2009).

There is one instance, however, where the ethnic language has managed to survive and thrive even among the dominant language of the country. Fishman (2013) discussed how a strategy of isolation and non-participation has allowed the Amish, Mennonites, and Khasidic orthodox Yiddish-speaking communities to maintain their ethnic languages. This strategy allowed the communities to ensure

that interaction between young and old was done so using the ethnic language with no outside interference. Fishman (2013) concluded:

> Unless a culture supports its own major institutions it becomes dependent upon 'outsiders' (the federal government, the city council, the state legislature, foundations, and other 'foreign' charities) for the continuation, stabilization and growth of its own ethnolinguistic lifelines. (p. 474).

Paradoxically, the learning of the dominant language is essential for refugee groups, or groups in a marginalised position, to be able to access services in the country, such as school. Yet in doing so, the ethnic language gradually becomes replaced by the dominant language as soon as the second and third generation. Again, the literature concerning language shift and maintenance on refugee groups in protracted situations is sparse, so further research is required to understand how long periods of time spent overseas affect language usage. The literature alludes to the futile attempt that any intervention, school, family or otherwise, has on the retention of language, yet a strategy of isolation was found to preserve language to some extent. The research, therefore, needs to investigate the strategies employed by refugee schools to explore if their language interventions are successful in stemming the forces of acculturation, or alternatively, if refugee schools accept the language of the host nation.

The previous section explored language loss and shift and discovered that institutions such as the family and school could play a role in the preservation or maintenance of language, though its impact on maintenance may be limited. The following discussion looks at schools, specifically in the role they play in the acculturation process, and the impact school has on the child. Where theories and research on behavioural, religious, and linguistic acculturation primarily look into

the process of change, they do not provide a broader context through which to explore the rationale behind change, or lack thereof. Another theoretical insight is required to provide a framework for further analysis into the underlying reasons that cause individuals or groups to retain or lose aspects that are connected to culture and identity.

Core Values

Among the research on acculturation, the theory of Core Values (Smolicz, 1981) has been used to explore further patterns of loss and maintenance, and aspects related to identity. Core values refer to how a group builds a connection around a shared sense of identity, which includes family, clan, race, and religion (Conversis, 1990; Gogonas, 2011; Smolicz, 1984). Tannenbaum (2009) explored the core values of three groups in Israel and found that though core values were centred around language, the motivation for its maintenance and preservation had deeper sociocultural and historical implications. The first group were Russian Jews who had moved to Israel. This group valued language as it provided a link to its cultural origins, where it is considered a high-status language connected to education and knowledge. While this group sought to integrate into Israeli society, the Russian language provided a bridge to the homeland. The next group were Jews from Ethiopia. Like the Russian group, language was connected to culture, but the study found that there was a greater sense of urgency to retain this language as many feared it would be lost, impacting intergenerational relationships within the family. The last group provided a different interpretation as to why language was a core value. The study found that the Arab Israeli group emphasised their language, Arabic, as a tool in which to symbolise their defiance to the Hebrew hegemony.

The language had numerous socio-political undertones and was used to connect the participants to a transnational Arab identity. This finding is very similar to a study of Basque and Catalan groups in Spain who use language to oppose oppression (Conversis, 1990), and Polish groups in Australia who had a long history of resisting dominant social forces in the homeland (Smolicz, 1991).

In one study, religion rather than language was identified as the core value as the ethnic language had splintered into two dialects, which led politicians to emphasise unification and support around a religious core value (Conversis, 1990). Moreover, a study by Gogonas (2012) of Coptic and Arab Egyptians in Greece showed that even groups that share the same nationality have different core values. While the Coptic group showed signs of language shift to Greek, the Arab group were bilingual in both and retained a stronger sense of literacy in Arabic than the Coptic Egyptians. The rationale for this, the author explained, was that religion was the core value of the Arab Egyptians, and as the Arabic language is intertwined in the Islamic faith, its maintenance was that much more crucial. Moreover, due to the lack of mosques in the area, a Muslim community grew to offer places to worship, providing spaces to socialise and use Arabic.

As an aspect closely related to acculturation, the theory of core values provides an additional lens through which to explore deeper sociocultural, political, historical, and religious connections that correlate to the core value's preservation. The theory itself has not been applied to refugee learning centres. Thus, it would make a useful addition to any researcher wishing to explore the core values of refugee education. Researchers could explore which core values are esteemed by the community and if these values are embodied by the refugee school.

Overview

Given the dearth of research conducted on refugee education, especially education for refugees in protracted situations, this chapter has had to turn to other areas of research to search for findings and theories that could potentially apply to the dissertation. The lack of research means that at present there are many areas that can be investigated. The consequence of this is that there are a number of research gaps that need to be addressed. The following section explores and explains these gaps, followed by the final section which discusses the research question for the dissertation.

Research Gaps

Under the three main themes of section 3, protection, identity, and acculturation, the following section explores the research gaps as they pertain to each theme. A number of gaps and questions emerge due to the lack of prior research. The following section illustrates just how much research is still required to understand the role and function of refugee schools.

Protection

Frameworks that explore the protective aspect of schooling incorporate physical, psychological, and cognitive themes (Nicolai & Tripplehorn, 2003); however, these may not be the only areas that provide a sense of safety. With a scarcity of research on the protective function of refugee schools in general, studies need to explore how protection is conceptualised by refugee schools in the Malaysian context. Research has noted how strategies such as invisibility (Alzoubi et al., 2017; El-Shaarawi, 2015; Grabska, 2006; Sommers, 2001) and avoidance

(Alzoubi et al., 2017) are utilised by individuals to ensure personal safety, although there is insufficient information about which strategies refugee schools use to ensure protection and how it is achieved.

Protection has often been viewed from the perspective of the person providing it, which in many cases are aid agencies and the UNHCR. Due to the protracted situations that refugees are in, time spent in exile can be many years. As funding cycles are yearly, there is no guarantee that protection can be provided from external forces year after year. Self-reliance is the only certainty for refugees, and a deeper understanding of how refugee communities ensure safety through their schools would demonstrate how to conceptualise safety as a long-term endeavour. Doing so requires the use of theoretical frameworks such as The Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice (ITTP) (Stephan & Stephan, 2013). These structures can be used to push theoretical understanding further so that protection can be reconceptualised for refugee schools and the communities they serve.

Identity

Exploring how an individual identifies is beyond the purview of the dissertation. Given the complexities involved in conducting such a study, this becomes more challenging with refugees in protracted positions. Therefore, investigating how groups transmit identity through their faith, language, and culture is more attainable. Religion is a highly underreported area of research, especially in the context of schools. With a large amount of research coming from countries that have secularised their schooling system, religion rarely features in studies. For many communities, however, faith is inextricably connected to how identity is constructed. Because of this, religion cannot be placed aside when exploring

identity, and for research that explores schooling where the community that established the school has a strong sense of religiosity, faith needs to be investigated. The literature on faith in refugee schools is also lacking. So, this presents a sizeable research gap to be investigated. There is a scarcity of information on how refugee schools incorporate faith within the day and how this is achieved. These are very basic areas of research, but they are areas nonetheless that open a line of enquiry to which there previously was none. Without an appreciation of the role that faith plays in refugee schools, policy that assists these schools is missing a vital component of how representatives of the school self-identify. This information is important to build a conceptualisation of the role and function of the school.

Conversely, research on language is extensive. Its connection to identity has been well documented, yet the research is dominated by studies carried out with individuals and groups who live in settler countries, which is the final place of settlement. The literature on the salience of language for refugees in protracted situations is far less common, with only minor references through vignettes of language usage by a community. Refugee schools may play a vital role in the language process, as outside of the family they are the one place where the language can be learned. That said, there is relatively little known about how refugee schools use language.

As with the section on faith, this opens up an interesting area of enquiry. Studies need to explore what the primary languages in refugee schools are and why these languages were chosen. Additionally, it would be worth exploring which other languages are used and then identify their significance to the school and connection to the needs of the wider community. Finally, in teaching these

languages, a study could examine the teachers' materials and if they match the primary language of the school.

To conceptualise identity from the perspective of refugees in protracted situations, a unidimensional theoretical framework such as Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), provides rich, in-depth enquiry into how an individual identifies; however, a theory is required to conceptualise identity as a multidimensional concept. This is where Anderson's (1983) work on imagined communities and later adaptions by Norton (2001) and Kanno (2003) provide a theoretical framework that can be used to investigate how language, faith, and culture are incorporated into collective goals for identity. An imagined community framework allows for a multidimensional approach to investigate how identity is manifested in the learning centre through the construction of the IC. Thus far, no study has used this approach to investigate refugee schools, so this provides a rich opportunity for its enquiry.

Acculturation

The vast majority of research on acculturation stems from settlement countries and is conducted with groups who have already made their homes in a country. A significant gap in the literature is research on how refugees in protracted situations experience change through intercultural contact. In connection with the dissertation, how schools manage acculturation is an area that has received relatively little attention, even in settler countries, as researchers tend to focus on singular areas such as language change or psychological stress. Schools, however, play a significant role in the life of the child, and the literature has noted the potential impact that acculturation has on behaviour, faith, and language. What is

unknown is how refugee schools manage acculturation, especially during long periods of exile. There is limited research on how refugee schools facilitate the process of acculturation into the host nation and how this occurs. Alternatively, if a school does not facilitate this process, it would be of interest to know how or if the effects of acculturation are mitigated. What would account for valuable insight into refugee schools would be an explanation as to what responses the learning centres have to acculturation. Surprisingly, this area has received little to no attention in the literature, even though the majority of refugees are in protracted situations. This leaves a considerable gap in the literature for enquiry into this area, especially to understand the role of refugee schools in this process and how it has changed over time.

Education for Refugees in Protracted Positions

There is no real conceptualisation of education for refugees in protracted positions, so policies and frameworks tend to reflect immediate access to education rather than its long-term provision. This presents a significant gap in the research. Though researchers have begun to build a conceptualisation of the refugee education experience for protracted situations (Dryden-Peterson, 2016), the work is in its infancy, and a considerable amount of research is still required before an accurate account of this form of education can be created.

In the case of all the research gaps, what is apparent is the need for scholarly research to understand the basic role and function of refugee schools. For the most part, research to date has investigated areas such as language, identity, and faith in isolation and not as part of a multi-dimensional examination of how these areas work, complement, and influence each other. The main research question has to

take this into consideration and ensure that it addresses the role of the schools, the challenges faced, how they meet the needs of the communities they serve, and ultimately how the schools have evolved over time.

Research Question

The research gaps present a number of questions that pertain to the main themes of protection, identity, and acculturation that were addressed in this chapter. Each research gap equates to a study in of itself; however, the aim of this dissertation is to provide an overview of refugee education so that future studies can explore the research gaps in more depth and breadth and use the dissertation as the groundwork for future research. Based on the research gaps, the following question frames the dissertation.

'What is the role of learning centres for refugee communities in Malaysia?'

Although simplistic in its wording, the question encapsulates what is required by the dearth in research on refugee schools, which is an in-depth look and analysis of the role of refugee schools and their function in the community. The literature has alluded that the role of refugee schools is more significant than the literature informs, so the dissertation seeks to provide a greater account of these places. To complement the main research question, four additional sub-questions have been developed that seek to push the main research question even further.

1. What needs and aspirations have displaced communities responded to in establishing and maintaining learning centres?
2. How do the learning centres approach the meeting of these needs and aspirations?

3. What challenges do the displaced communities face in using the learning centres to meet their needs and aspirations?

4. How have the learning centres evolved as a result of the challenges and changing needs and aspirations?

Using the main research question and sub-questions allows the dissertation to explore the role and function of refugee schools and how they approach needs and aspirations, which are conceptualised into protection, identity, and acculturation.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methodology and methods used in the study. The participants' vulnerable and marginalised position was a deciding factor in selecting research approaches from all theoretical, methodological, and ethical perspectives. The researcher sought to conduct research ***with*** the participants thus avoiding research ***of*** the participants, which would view the individual as a subject to be studied and further exacerbate the vulnerable position. Answering the main research question (What is the role of the learning centres?) required the researcher to look to the participants to reveal through their lived experiences how the learning centres function within the community and their role in educating children. Thus, the participants were not subjects to be studied; they were knowledgeable, informed individuals with the power to provide the researcher with edification into the world of learning centres.

The aim of the dissertation to work with the participants pushed the researcher away from a positivist research design in favour for an epistemological position that viewed the individual as unique to their own reality and view of the world. The interpretivist stance selected for the dissertation is outlined, explained, and rationalised in the first section of this chapter. Following this is a discussion of the theoretical perspective. This section explains the use of interactionism and discusses why the study had to use an adapted version of this (Structural Interactionism) to account for structures that are especially present in the lives of refugees in Malaysia.

The next area discusses the chosen methodology: ethnography. Crucial to the study was to work ***with*** the participants, and this section explains the

significance and benefits of this methodological approach. In connection with this, the subsequent area examines the data collection methods, which consisted of participant observation, field notes, interviews, and a reflexive journal. How the participants and learning centres were sampled is the next significant area outlined. The selection criteria and the rationale for the inclusion of three learning centres from the same country that are separated by ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences is explained. To provide context to the study and background information on the learning centres and the communities they serve, the next area provides a look at each community with a brief background into each research group and a description of each learning centre which includes floor plans for reference. This is followed by an explanation of how the research sites were accessed, a timeline for the study, and a write up of the pilot study.

The final areas addressed in this chapter are ethnics and trustworthiness. The former underpins the whole study, so this section discusses areas of ethnical sensitivity, such as positionality, power and dominance, permission, reciprocity, and access. This culminates with the incorporation of an ethnical framework that utilises iterative consent and reflexivity to address the ethical concerns of the study. The final significant area of discussion is trustworthiness and includes a discussion as to why this is preferable in the content of the dissertation over reliability and validity.

Knowledge Claims

The following section outlines the researcher's ontological and epistemological position in terms of how reality is viewed and understood. The perspectives considered for the dissertation are based upon the needs of the research

and the methods employed to capture the lived experiences of the communities with whom the researcher worked, in addition to the researcher's own positional orientations to the world and to knowledge. The study positions itself in an interpretivist paradigm, with an ontological stance that views reality as being created by the individual and groups. The study adopts a position that these lived realities must be interpreted through the meanings, events, and experiences of the very people who have lived them. This is especially salient for the participants in the dissertation, given their position as displaced and marginalised. What follows is a discussion of epistemological decisions made for the dissertation.

Epistemological Position

The dissertation adopts an interpretivist stance that views the individual as a complex being that interprets objective reality differently from another individual. The study rejects a positivist stance where the individual is independent of consciousness and completely submissive to societal forces that dictate actions. A positivist study would seek to find truth and meaning by utilising quantitative research techniques and methods such as surveys and statistical analysis. Data collected in this manner is limited to responses based on predetermined questions and limits the opportunity for participants to expand and reflect on areas that may not have previously been considered.

The knowledge produced using these techniques is limited to the confines of the study's hypothesis and its generalised outcomes. While this epistemological view may hold well for certain studies that seek to test a pre-defined hypothesis, the specific requirements of the dissertation drew the researcher to an epistemological view that sought not to understand but to explain human interaction.

By incorporating this epistemological position, the study is rooted in the worldview of the participants and their interpretation of reality. One point of contention is the position of the participants in the dissertation as refugees. Epistemologically speaking, though the study views its participants as having the ability to consciously interpret their own reality, as refugees they are constrained by their position in a society that provides no rights, legal recourse, or access to services such as health care and education. By not exploring the coercive potential of societal and legal structures the study would be one-sided, and its theoretical contributions would inadequately reflect the participants' actual position. Therefore, the dissertation adheres to the worldview from the perspective of the participants, but is conscious of structures that are not within the control of a refugee.

Theoretical Perspective

Using a theoretical perspective that would allow the interactions of the participants to be interpreted from their perspective was needed for the dissertation. Smith (2008) stated, “The goal of interpretive inquiry is the interpretation of the interpretations people give to their own actions and the actions of others (double hermeneutic)” (p. 460). Interactionism is one perspective that provides exactly this as it explores the social world from the very people through which it is experienced.

Interactionism

With its roots in American pragmatism, interactionism owes much of its development from scholars such as Mead, Dewey, Peirce, and James (Hall, 2003). One of the early proponents of interactionism was Mead (1863-1931), who viewed society as being created via a social process. It was his student, Blumer (1969), who

coined the term symbolic interactionism (SI) and through whom it was later popularised. At the time of its inception, interactionism was in contrast to the dominant sociological thinking of the time, which viewed society from the top-down as structures that dictated human motivation. Blumer (1969) stated, "One has to get inside of the defining process of the actor in order to understand his action" (p. 16). Carter and Fuller (2016) further elaborated on this by adding that "symbolic interactionists shift their attention to the interpretation of subjective viewpoints and how individuals make sense of their world from their unique perspective" (p. 932). Blumer (1969) affirmed the down-to-earth approach that SI takes to the study of social life. Research that is rooted in the social world should base its interpretations from within the social world it wishes to engage. Blumer (1969) argued that symbolic interactionism is underpinned by three central tenets, which are divided into three parts:

1. Meaning is given to objects based on how people act towards them.
2. Meaning is learned based on interactions with others.
3. Meaning is an interpretive process that is utilised for specific instances that are confronted. (Blumer, 1969)

Blumer (1969) placed the objects, which are referred to in tenet one, into three categories: 1) physical objects - computers, books; 2) social objects - people, friends, police officer, and 3) abstract objects - values, cultural traditions, beliefs (p. 10). According to Blumer (1969), the meaning that a person has attached to one of the aforementioned objects "…sets the way in which he sees the object, the way in which he is prepared to act toward it, and the way in which he is ready to talk about it" (p. 11). When a person has established a meaning for themselves in relation to an object, it will dictate how the object is perceived and discussed. For example, a

Christian person who wears a cross pendant will have formed a different meaning to it for themselves in conjunction with their faith and congregation, versus a person who wears and views it as a fashion statement. In the theory of SI, "[t]he meaning of anything and everything has to be formed, learned, and transmitted through a process of indication —a process that is necessarily a social process" (Blumer, 1969, p.12). In this sense objects—as defined above—have no actual meaning unless one has been created via a group process of interaction that assigns meaning to the object. In the context of the dissertation, physical objects include the learning centre itself, the learning resources and materials, and books, while the social objects are teachers and peers, and abstract objects are language, faith, culture, traditions, and values.

The aim of the dissertation is to explore how individuals in the centre make sense of their world through the physical, social, and abstract objects they interact with.

The influence of interactionism can be found in a number of theories (Fine, 1993). Given the broad use and interpretations of interpretive concepts, Fine (1993) explores two critical areas that give cases for criticism concerning symbolic interactionism: micro/macro and agency/structure. Using Fine's key areas, the following section explores them in more detail and discusses how these areas are addressed in the context of the dissertation.

Micro/Macro

The first issue that arises with symbolic interactionism is the micro/macro debate, which falls into the ability for a study to make claims. From a sociological perspective, micro refers to a study conducted in a single location with a small

sample of individuals, while macro refers to a study that is conducted across a large sample such as across two nations. An argument against a micro-study is that the sample is so small and specific that the results or findings are limited to that specific sample or site, and are therefore not representative of the larger population as there is not a larger sample to conduct a cross-comparative analysis. Yet, Fine (1993) and Kelle (2001) both agreed that researchers who take a structuralist or macro view to society have to make assumptions that are found in the micro-level. The debate has received the attention of a number of researchers (Annells, 2011; Becker & McCall, 1990; Carter & Fuller, 2016; Fine, 1993; Williams, 2008), with symbolic interactionism singled out at times due to the micro approach to analysis that is taken.

The dissertation does not reject the merits of conducting a study with either a micro or macro view. That said, a macro view would position the dissertation too far away from the individuals whose voices need to be captured. A micro view would not be entirely suitable for two reasons. First, while the study explores the lived experiences of the individual, the learning centres represent a group consciousness of numerous individuals including teachers, parents, students, community leaders, and others connected to the centres. Second, a purely micro view would not allow for the exploration of the impact of societal and legal structures (see Chapter 4 for an in-depth discussion on these) or how the participants in the dissertation interpret their social world. To address these issues, the dissertation ventures into the meso-layer, which sits between the micro and macro layer (Faist, 2010) and explores groups. Investigating this layer, Fine and Hallett (2014) suggested that "[g]roups are a behavioural space between individuals and the structures and power systems that institutions provide" (p. 1774). Within the

meso-layer the dissertation explores group idocultures, which are shared attributes such as beliefs, behaviours, and customs, that are used by members for future interaction (Fine, 1979). This layer allows the study to provide individual accounts, but also to acknowledge the role of the group and the structures that may influence individual and group decision making.

Agency/Structure

The final criticism against symbolic interactionism is that "interactionists only believe in agentic choices" (Fine, 1993, p. 69), meaning that this work is firmly rooted in agency rather than structure (Dennis & Martin, 2005). This contention is raised in the notion that Mead viewed society from the point of view of the individual and not from social units or relationships between people and groups (Couch, 1984). Hylland-Eriksen (2001) argued that society is dependent on interaction, yet for interaction to occur, society is needed. Therefore, scholars have attempted to bridge the agency/structure divide by viewing them both as interconnected. Giddens' (1986) theory of 'structuration' viewed the notion of agency and structure in different terms. According to Giddens' (1986) ideas of the 'Duality of Structure,' "[s]tructure is both the medium and the outcome of the human activities which it recursively organizes" (p. 61). In this, Giddens is not advocating an argument for either agency or structure, as for him they both exist in unison.

To address concerns over agency and structure, Stryker (2008) expanded the ideas of symbolic interactionism to envision structural interactionism (SI). Skryker viewed interaction not as being fluid and ever-changing but leading to patterns that would maintain and continue social structures (Carter & Fuller, 2016).

In applying a structural approach to SI, Stryker was attempting to bridge debates between micro and macro sociology, and this work further expanded symbolic interactionist concepts. Stryker (2008) offered an overview of structural interactionism below:

> Structural interactionism sees the effect of social structures as a process by which large-scale structures such as class, age, gender, and ethnicity operate through more intermediate structures such as neighbourhoods, schools, and associational memberships to affect relationships in social networks. The latter are proximate structures presumed to shape the content of self and its organisation. (pp. 19-20)

The strength in symbolic interactionism is how participants are not treated as objects in which to be studied. Researchers adapt their research techniques in order to capture how participants understand the world around them (Carter & Fuller, 2016). The weakness of SI and one criticised by Fine (1993) is that interactions are fluid, and the ability to make choices is not a luxury that all enjoy. In the case of the dissertation, agentic choices were not given for refugees who are deemed 'illegal immigrants' by the host nation. There is agency, but it is impeded by the legal standing of refugees in Malaysia and the manner in which communities have to be self-reliant as there is no support for health or education. These factors have to be taken into consideration, and for this reason, Stryker's (2008) structural interactionism was adopted for the dissertation so that notions of structure that impeded agency could be examined during the interview process as well as during the collection and analysis of data.

Research Design

The research design presented in Figure 3.1 outlines the structure of the dissertation. The study employs a multi-sited, ethnographic methodology that is built around a cyclical model (Figure 3.1). Data were collected from semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and field notes from three refugee schools. Ethics plays a crucial role in this design due to the participants' position as refugees, so it is placed in a position where data analysis, analytical lenses, and

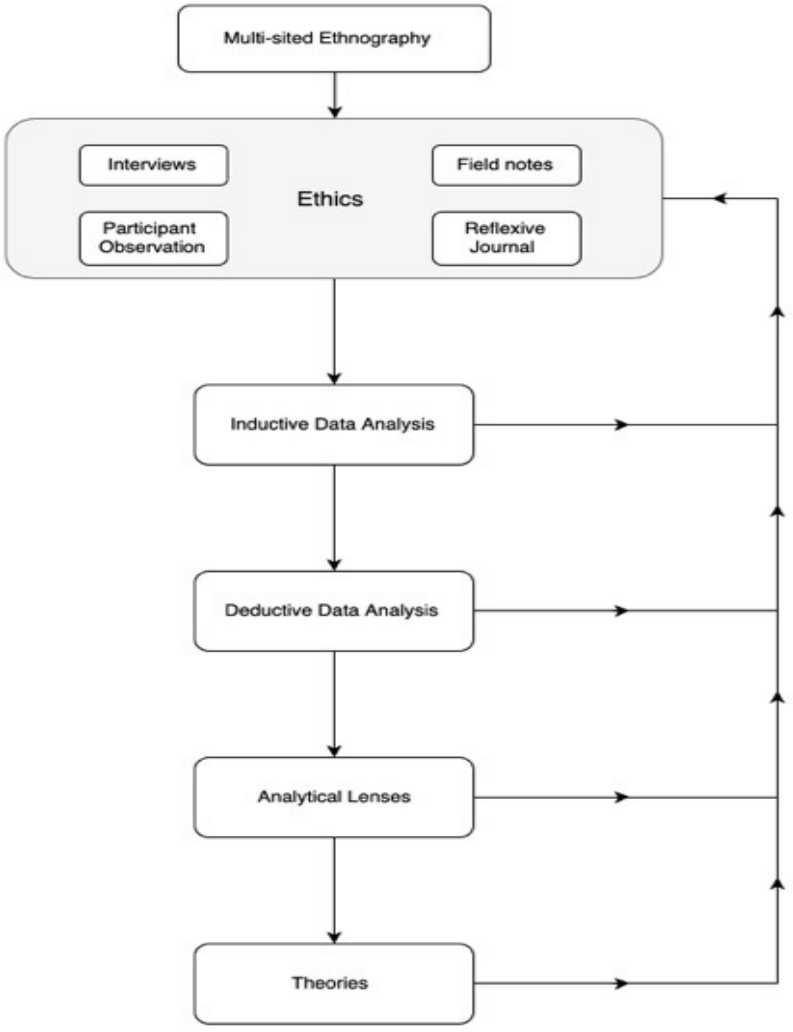


Figure 3.1: Research Design

theories are cycled back through the ethical approach, which will be explained in more detail later in this chapter. The next layer of the research design is the reflexive

journal. This was used to reflect on the ethical collection of data, but also to provide an avenue for the researcher to remain critical throughout the research process. A two-layer analysis was incorporated with an indicative layer using grounded theory techniques, and deductive layer based on themes generated from the literature review. Upon completion of the previous stage, the data was then analysed using analytical lenses before theories were developed. Utilising the cyclical design allowed for an element of flexibility during the study. The participants' lives can change rapidly, so the research design needs to be able to respond to changes, updates, and new information by reiterating stages or re-examining data.

Methodology

To capture the lived experiences from within the social world of the participants, a methodology was required that provided the researcher with direct access to that world. As such, ethnography was chosen as it met the direct requirements of the study. Conquergood (1991) stated that "[e]thnography is an embodied practice; it is an intensely sensuous way of knowing" (p. 180). In this, he alluded to the manner in which ethnographic researchers themselves participate in the study—embodying the experience as they research emotionally, physically, cognitively, and theoretically. The rationale behind the use of ethnography is directly associated with the epistemological position and theoretical choices made for the dissertation and is influenced by the work of Blumer (1969), who insisted that the researcher 'get inside' the action. This view is consistent with interpretivist epistemologies that seek to understand, interpret, and explain social life from the point of view of its participants.

One role of ethnography, according to Fetterman (2008), is to describe a group or culture. Ethnography differs from positivist forms of research where the main source of data is a questionnaire, as the researcher spends time with a community or group over a period of time in order to collect data (Hammersley, 2006). Ethnographers study the values, beliefs, and behaviour (Harrowing et al., 2010) of groups and culture (Fetterman, 2008), and collect data which quantitative research designs are unable to capture (Carspecken, 1996), such as data from observations of the social world in which the participants live. This could include descriptions of the site, including notes on the way the location is decorated, how people dress, what food they eat, or how individuals behave and act in certain situations. By getting inside the action, an ethnographer is able get an emic (insider's) perspective, which is privileged over a researcher's etic (outsider) perspective. The emic perspective allows the researcher to collect data that would otherwise not be considered for a study, yet its incorporation provides a valuable data source on the lives of people in their natural environment.

Ethnography is often criticised for being too site-specific, which in turn creates a local view of what is being studied (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Hammersley, 2006). The criticism is based around the notion that some ethnographic studies are limited to a micro view, thus not offering any insight into what occurs from a macro view (Hammersley, 2006). Maintaining a micro view could, as Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) suggested, neglect or ignore macro-level aspects that may be of importance to the study. To address this, the dissertation incorporated a model of multi-sited ethnography (MSE). In the traditional form of ethnography, research is often conducted on one specific site (Falzon, 2009). Marcus (1995) challenged this notion with the concept of MSE.

Moreover, in substantiating the need for MSE, as well as providing further insight, Fine (2011) asserted that "[t]o avoid basing generalizations on idiosyncrasies, ethnographers should examine multiple scenes to gain a measure of confidence that findings characterize the class of groups (and sites), and not just the particular group (or site)" (p. 85). Though Fine may be overgeneralising as not all ethnographic inquiries will lend themselves to MSE, for this particular study, three separates sites avoid Fine's (2011) concerns for findings that are based on a single site and provide data for cross-comparative analysis. Furthermore, as previously discussed, the meso-layer serves to provide the dissertation with a glimpse into individual and group activity, thus avoiding potential issues with micro/macro approaches.

Methods

Within the ethnographic methodology, the dissertation adapts a Case Study method (Blatter, 2008) as a tool by which to collect rich data that can provide 'thick description'. Blatter (2008) states that cases can focus on one or a few phenomena, with this dissertation choosing the latter. The strengths of the case study method is the ability to investigate these phenomena in-depth. Blatter (2008) adds that: "The quality of a case study, thus, does not depend on providing detailed evidence on every step of a causal chain; rather, it depends on a skillful use of empirical evidence for making a convincing argument within a scholarly discourse that consists of competing or complementary theories" (p.71). The main methods for the collection of data in the dissertation were semi-structured interviews and participant observation. This section details how the interviews were conducted and discusses

the research instrument. Moreover, the process of observation is discussed in terms of what data was collected and how data were captured using logs.

Interviews

Framing the interview process, the dissertation adopted a Life History technique (Gough, 2008). This form of narrative-based inquiry is used in a diverse field of research and seeks to explore how individuals make sense of their lived experiences. Gough (2008) suggests that situating the interviews in the daily contexts in which they happen provides " …a sense of how individual lives are not free-floating, but are socially constructred" (p. 484). In the case of this dissertation, it was imperative to capture the life histories from the participants via the interview process so that their lived experiences could be captured from their perspective.

For Madison (2012), "[i]nterviewing is a dynamic process fundamental to ethnography. It is part technique, part ethics, part theory, part method, part intuition, part collaboration, and part openness to deep vulnerability" (p. 42). The dissertation adopts what Chenail (2011) described as a 'discovery-orientated' approach to interviewing, where the questions are open-ended. The strength in this approach is that the responses collected are bound only to the limitation of the question, in that the respondents are free to answer as they please, without being limited to a set answer scheme as in a questionnaire. Carspecken (1996) stated that the most suitable method of questioning for a qualitative study is one that is semi-structured. The research questions are separated into four distinct sections to correspond with each sub-question. The questions have been designed, collated, and paired with respondents who include administrators, teachers, students, and parents in order to match suitability and relevance. The questions can be found in Appendix 1. The

questions in the dissertation follow the Patton (1990) model as suggested by Madison (2012), whereby questions revolve around: behaviour and experience, opinion and value, emotions, knowledge, sense, and background information.

Using this model ensured that the questions asked range in their scope and aim. The questions were screened on two occasions before the pilot study commenced. First, the questions were checked by the supervisor of the study, after which the questions were screened by the institution's Procedural Ethics Committee (PEC). Once approval had been granted, the questions were then pilot tested in the first learning centre.

Before approaching the participants, the researcher conducted a trial interview with the community leader. This served two purposes. The first was for the community leader to screen the questions. This would demonstrate what information the researcher was interested in and the areas that would be investigated. If the community leader had reservations about any of the questions, these could be raised and discussed.

Second, the researcher used this interview to explore the effectiveness of the questions. The community leader's English proficiency was high as he had spent a number of years in Malaysia, so this interview served as a bridge to future interviews. His responses were analysed in order to ascertain each question's effectiveness in terms of the response and how the question was understood. For example, it was noted that some questions were met with uncertainty. The researcher concluded that these questions needed to be rephrased. One question asked "What is the role of the learning centre?" and essentially asked the participant to provide a theoretical conceptualisation of the learning centre, which was the job of the researcher. As a result, these question types were taken out and replaced with

questions that focused on daily activities and experiences. The aforementioned question was replaced with a number of questions such as 'What subjects are important in the centre and why?' By making the questions less theoretical and vague, the interviewee was more responsive, which led to more discussions on related topics. From this interview, all the questions were re-evaluated so that they were grounded in the participants' lived experiences and social world.

A significant factor in the dissertation was language barrier. Working with representatives from three linguistically diverse groups meant that the researcher would need assistance with participants who did not share the same language as the researcher, which is English. In the pre-visits with each community, this issue was discussed at length. For the most part many of the representatives from each learning centre were proficient enough in English to express themselves well. In fact, their position in the learning centre was given to them based in part on their knowledge of English and that there would be times when there would be communication between volunteers or with visits from the UNHCR.

The nature of the study and its focus on education meant that the issues of sharing highly personal, sensitive, or even troubling information did not really materialise except for one occasion when a participant shared her experiences with violence against her husband. On this occasion, though, the participant spoke English well and shared this information of her own volition. The language barriers did not significantly impede the study in any way. This was just a barrier to overcome, and with the assistance of those willing to help, the study expanded its reach to hear the voices of individuals who would have otherwise been silent due to not speaking the same language as the researcher.

Research Instrument

The research instrument (Appendix 1) has been constructed around the main research question (RQ), which is: What role do learning centres play for displaced communities in Malaysia? This main RQ includes an additional four sub-questions:

1. What needs and aspirations have displaced communities responded to in establishing and maintaining learning centres?
2. How do the learning centres approach the meeting of these needs and aspirations?
3. What challenges do the displaced communities face in using the learning centres to meet their needs and aspirations?
4. How have the learning centres evolved as a result of the challenges and changing needs and aspirations?

The questions were designed to elicit responses that are 'discovery-orientated' (Chenail, 2011). The dissertation purposefully used open-ended questions that asked the interviewee to explain their experience and opinions from their perspective. Before the questions were used in the field, they went through two rounds of pilot testing. First, 'peer-debriefers' (Carspecken, 1996), who are fellow researchers though not involved directly in the study, examined the instrument for questions that were possibly leading or unsuitable. Next, the questions were pilot tested in the field. In doing so the researcher could identify which questions worked and which questions needed to be rephrased, reworked, or taken out of the instrument entirely.

Participant Observation

Hammersley (2006) calls into question ethnographic studies that do not collect data using some form of observations. For the dissertation, Participant Observation (PO) was used so the researcher could adhere to Blumer's (1969) advice to get inside the action. Bernard (2011) claimed that using PO gives the researcher a unique view as it provides an emic understanding of the people who will participate in the study. In addition to this, unlike a complete observer (Merriam, 2009), PO brings the research closer to the participants. In doing so, the participants may feel more comfortable about opening up and talking about their experiences. The benefits of this data collection method are addressed by Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) who state PO can assist a study in three key areas:

1. To enhance the quality of the data obtained during fieldwork.
2. To enhance the quality of the interpretation of data.
3. To encourage the formulation of new research questions and hypotheses grounded in on-the-scene observation. (p. 10)

In addition to the key areas put forward by Dewalt and Dewalt (2011), Schensul et al. (1999) added that participant observation can aid participants in becoming more accustomed to the presence of the researcher, and that this allows the researcher to observe how the social environment is organised. There are a number of stances that a researcher can take to observe the social environment with Gold (1958) creating a typology of participant-observer roles. Baker (2006) observed how Gold's original participant-as-observer has been updated by Adler and Adler (1994) and termed active participation or active membership.

This stance is incorporated into the dissertation, as it permits engagement with the participants but does not require the researcher to be fully committed to the values of the participants (Adler & Adler, 1994). During participant observation

sessions, the researcher adopted Spradley's (1980) guide, which included the observation of objects, acts, activities, events, time, actors, behaviour, and space. With a significant amount of data collected from PO, the next section explains how this data was captured in field notes.

Field Notes

During fieldwork sessions that involved participant observation, data was captured using an adapted version of Dewalt and Dewalt's (2011) three-layer approach (Table 3.1).

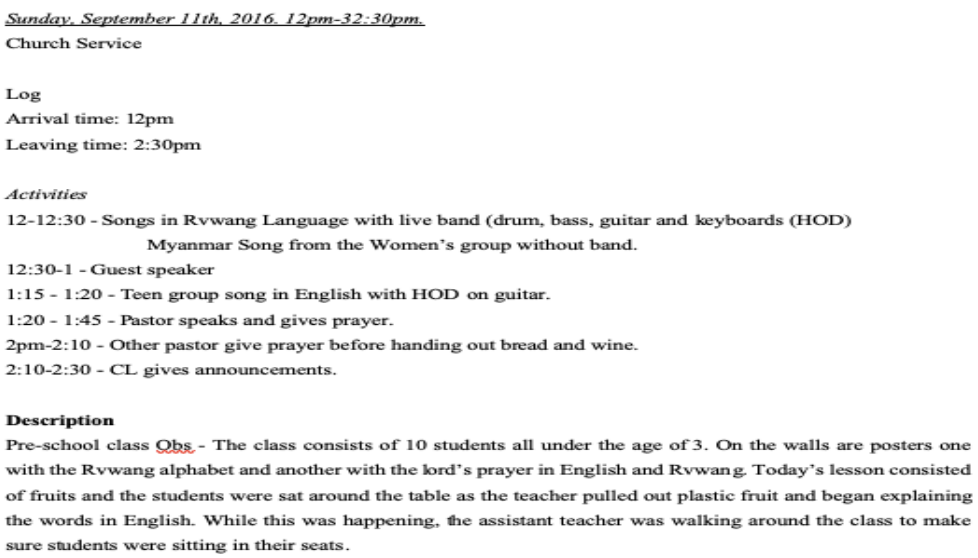
Layer	Action	Example
1	Jot notes during participant observation	Physical environment, people and their behaviour, activities, events, times and feelings
2	Detailed descriptive write up	Physical environment, people and their behaviour, activities, events, times and feelings
3	Methodological write up	Thoughts, reflections, notes on methods, ethnics

Table 3.1: Data collection and write up

The first layer required the researcher to capture jot notes. These were taken during participant observation sessions and are not a detailed write up of the action as it occurred. Instead, jot notes allowed the researcher to note down keywords, phrases of participant behaviour, and sketches of the physical environment. Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) emphasised the importance that jot notes be written into detailed field notes as soon as the opportunity presents. It is here that the second layer began where during periods of downtime in the field and/or soon after the completion of each fieldwork session, the notes were written up with rich description and detail.

The third and final layer was reserved for methodological notes. Upon reflecting on each day of fieldwork the researcher noted down his thoughts on the day's research. It is here the researcher could consider aspects that might warrant ethnical discussions or ways to improve fieldwork or questions that could be included in the interview sessions.

The three-layer approach was used for all fieldwork sessions on all sites with full detailed field notes written on the researcher's computer and password protected for security measures. In addition to the information in Table 3.1, the researcher noted the dates, times, and activities in each log (Figure 3.2), which acted as a tool to recall the day's activities after the fact.



Sunday, September 11th, 2016. 12pm-32:30pm.
Church Service

Log
Arrival time: 12pm
Leaving time: 2:30pm

Activities
12-12:30 - Songs in Rvwang Language with live band (drum, bass, guitar and keyboards (HOD)
Myanmar Song from the Women's group without band.
12:30-1 - Guest speaker
1:15 - 1:20 - Teen group song in English with HOD on guitar.
1:20 - 1:45 - Pastor speaks and gives prayer.
2pm-2:10 - Other pastor give prayer before handing out bread and wine.
2:10-2:30 - CL gives announcements.

Description
Pre-school class Obs - The class consists of 10 students all under the age of 3. On the walls are posters one with the Rvwang alphabet and another with the lord's prayer in English and Rvwang. Today's lesson consisted of fruits and the students were sat around the table as the teacher pulled out plastic fruit and began explaining the words in English. While this was happening, the assistant teacher was walking around the class to make sure students were sitting in their seats.

Figure 3.2: Sample from the Researcher's Logbook

Sampling

This section first looks at the sampling strategy and selection criteria used for the learning centres, followed by the sampling strategies used to identify participants. In both instances, a purposive sampling strategy was adopted, with the addition of a snowball strategy used in order to gain access to a wider population.

Learning centres

To select three learning centres (LCs), a purposive sample strategy was implemented. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) suggested that while not representative of the wide population, purposive sampling allows the researcher to select cases that will be of use for the study. According to Eisenhardt (1989), selecting specific sites for studies will eliminate superfluous differences, as well as outline the limits of the study selection. Furthermore, Eisenhardt (1989) recommends against random sampling for a study such as this in favour of sites that can assist in generating theoretical insight. The researcher decided that three research sites would be needed in order to collect data that would provide a cross-sample for analysis and comparison. In order to collect data that could be used for cross-comparative analysis, the researcher considered which section criteria to use for each centre so that the study did not end up with three sites that were too similar in nature. To avoid this, a section criterion was developed to meet the needs and aims of the study (Table 3.2).

No.	Selection Criteria
1	Each LC serves representatives who all / mostly originate from the same country
2	Established by representatives from the community
3	Established between a partnership of community representatives and local NGO
4	Established in different years
5	Represent different ethnicities
6	Represent different ethnic languages
7	Represent different faiths

8	Employ full time ethnic teachers
9	Employ full-time, non-ethnic teachers

Table 3.2: Selection Criteria for Learning Centres

Acquiring permission to conduct research with refugee and/or minority groups can be challenging, especially when it is through a gatekeeper (Jacobson & Landau, 2003; Ellis et al., 2007), so the section criteria were not sacrosanct, and had to allow for a certain level of flexibility. A rigid secretion criteria would have ruled out many, if not all, the learning centres as they serve fluid communities who are in a constant state of change. The dissertation developed these criteria as a guide, aiming to sample learning centres with representatives who have various values, beliefs, and experiences. In selecting centres whose representatives originate from the same country (Table 3.2, No. 1), the study was able to research the history of that country so as to provide a background to each community and to understand who and where they came from.

Doing this allowed the researcher to be more informed about the community as well as aware of any cultural requirements and/or areas that should be addressed or avoided. Selection criteria number two was vital as the central aim of the dissertation was to investigate and understand the role of the learning centres from the perspective of the in-group. Selection criteria three was of equal importance as it provided a counterbalance so that the study could investigate how different individuals interpret the function of the learning centre. The remaining criteria (4-9) formed a guide for selecting centres, but there was more flexibility in their usage.

Table 3.3 below presents the selection criteria for the learning centres, and how each selection criteria is mapped to the three centres which were selected for

the dissertation. LC1 represents the Rvwang learning centre, LC2 represents a Mon learning centre, and LC3 represents a Rohingya learning centre. Both LC1 and LC2 were established by representatives from the community and employ ethnic teachers; in contrast, LC3 was established out of a partnership between representatives from the community and a Malaysian charity. A later section titled research location, learning centres and participants provides more information on each of the selected centres.

No.	Selection Criteria	LC 1	L C2	LC 3
1	Each LC serves representatives who all / mostly originate from the same country	√	√	√
2	Established by representatives from the community	√	√	x
3	Established between a partnership of community representatives and local NGO	x	x	√
4	Established in different years	√	√	√
5	Represent different ethnicities	√	√	√
6	Represent different ethnic languages	√	√	√
7	Represent different faiths	√	√	√
8	Employ full-time ethnic teachers	√	√	x
9	Employ full-time, non-ethnic teachers	x	x	√

Table 3.3: Selection Criteria Mapped to each of the Three Learning Centres

Participants

Within each case-study learning centre, a purposive and snowball strategy was adopted to sample participants for the study. Ball (1990), Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) discussed how purposive sampling is used to identify

'knowledgable people,' and go on to explain that sampling a population who are not experienced with what the study is investigating does not allow for the study to collect in-depth data. Once the learning centres were selected, the dissertation identified individuals who met the selection criteria, namely individuals who 1). were in a leadership role, actively involved within the community, and 2). participated in the creation of the learning centre or were knowledgeable of it. These individuals were, for the most part, leaders in their community and the gatekeepers who would decide whether the study could proceed. Gaining access to refugee communities is a complex endeavour and requires a level of rapport and trust to be developed between the researcher and the community leader.

The purposive sample helped the study to identify the gatekeeper, and from this point, a snowball sample strategy was used to identify more participants for the study. Atkinson and Flint (2001) noted that this technique is effective when trying to access individuals and groups who are hard to reach, and added that "the real promise of snowball sampling lies in its ability to uncover aspects of social experience often hidden from both the researcher's and lay person's view of social life" (p. 4). The hidden element that Atkinson and Flint (2001) refer to are these social aspects of which a person apart from the group would not be aware. To provide an illustration of this, the researcher planned to conduct interviews with teachers, students, parents, and community leaders. After completing one interview, the participant asked if the researcher would like to talk to the pastor of the community. This opened up the interview process to allow for another voice to come forward to share a lived experience through the eyes of a religious leader. Snowball sampling allowed for this unexpected occurrence and led to a new line of enquiry.

Though this strategy was effective, there were some areas that needed to be addressed. First, to capture a wide range of participants, the study aimed to interview participants from four primary groups (students, teachers, parents, and community leaders) as they represented the key stakeholders in the learning centres. For the referral chain, the study aimed to interview three to five individuals for each group, with the exception of the community leaders who were limited to one. This process was repeated for each learning centre until the study had interviewed participant groups from three separate sites. This approach was ethically sensitive as relying on the gatekeeper required the study to trust that no participants felt coerced, pressured, or obliged to participate. This concern is addressed in the section on ethics where an approach of iterative consent and reflexivity is incorporated to manage such situations. Table 3.4 provides an overview of each learning centre and contains data on the numbers of interviews conducted in each, in addition to the number of interviews conducted with each group.

Group	Rvwang Centre	Mon Centre	Rohingya Centre
Community Leaders	1	2	1
Ethnic Teachers	4	3	0
Malaysian Teachers	0	0	4
Students	4	5	5
Parents	3	2	0
Religious Leaders	1	1	1
Total	13	13	11
Overall Total: 37			

Table 3.4: Overview of the sample population

Table 3.4 outlines the number of participant interviews from each group and shows that the study was unable to secure interviews with parents from the Rohingya centre. Representatives from the learning centre spoke to some parents to enquire as to whether they would be able to participate in the study. The parents had no objection to the researcher being at the centre; however, there was little interest in answering the researcher's questions. This was also the case with parents from the Rvwang and Mon centres in the beginning until some parents showed an interest and were willing to answer some questions. There are two possible interpretations of their non-involvement. The first is that, as an outsider, the researcher needed more time to be accepted by the parents so that they would feel comfortable answering questions. Secondly, due to their status in Malaysia, the parents might have been wary about providing any information that would bring attention to themselves. Thus, not wanting to cause any discomfort, no Rohingya parents were included in the interview sessions.

Research Location, Learning Centres, & Participants

The research location for the dissertation was the city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which plays host to many displaced communities from around the world who live in relative exile as they wait in the hope of being resettled to another country. The wait can take many years (Hoffstaedter 2014; "The Long Wait," 2015; Low et al. 2014), and there are an estimated 270,621 asylum seekers and stateless people (UNHCR, 2015) living in Malaysia. Of these, an estimated 41,000 individuals are under the age of 18 and are eligible for schooling (UNHCR, 2018). Malaysia was chosen as the site of the dissertation due to the high concentration of refugee learning centres which have been established, many of which are located

within the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. There are learning centres located outside of the city, but these locations are less urbanised, and thus the daily experiences of those frequenting them may differ. It was important for the study to work with three separate learning centres with different backgrounds yet living in and around the same location. This way the study could compare the experiences of each group as it pertained to the same location. To date there is a lack of scholarly research and literature on this social phenomenon. In the absence of schooling, representatives from each community have taken it upon themselves to provide access to education. This presents a valuable research opportunity to explore how communities construct education and how education is conceptualised for communities who are in protracted positions.

Malaysia

Before looking at the learning centres, an overview of Malaysia is presented to contextualise the location of the study. Malaysia is located in South-East Asia, where it shares a border with Thailand in the North. The country has a population of around 32 million people, spread across thirteen states. Malaysia consists of three distinct ethnic groups that populate the country, which consist of Malay, Chinese, and Indian, with a number of indigenous groups located in the Eastern regions of Sabah and Sarawak. According to the BBC ("Malaysia Election," 2018), Malays who are Muslim are the dominant group holding majority positions in government, the police forces, and military.

The next largest group is the Chinese, who possess much of the economic power ("Malaysian Election," 2018). Though Islam is the dominant religion, other religions such as Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Hinduism are practiced

openly and freely. That is not to say there is no tension as there is a history of ethnic and religious strain between groups at various flashpoints throughout history. The presence of different ethnic groups means language usage is diverse in the country. Malay is the language of the government and official business, but English is commonly used. Education is a contentious area, with government schools using Malay. There are many private/government schools, though, that cater to each specific ethnic group and their heritage languages.

Learning Centres

Three learning centres participated in the dissertation, with each serving representatives from three ethnic groups that originate in Myanmar. Table 3.5 outlines demographic data on representatives that each learning centre serves and includes country of origin, ethnic group, language, and faith.

Country of origin	Ethnic Group	Region	Main Languages spoken	Faith	Estimated number of people in Malaysia
Myanmar	Rvwang	Kachin State (North)	Rvwang / Burmese	Christianity	500
Myanmar	Mon	Mon State (South)	Mon / Burmese	Buddhism	30,000
Myanmar	Rohingya	Rakhine State (West)	Rohingya / Burmese	Islam	150,000

Table 3.5: Demographic data

The following section explores each community and learning centre in more detail. While the dissertation cannot go into a full background of each ethnic group that participated, a brief history and background is provided to give the reader context on where the group originated and their rationale for coming to Malaysia.

Following this, each learning centre is discussed in terms of how it is structured, the number of students and teachers that are present in each centre, the centres' locations, and how each is funded. In addition to this, a floor plan was created in order to illustrate how each learning centre is organised in terms of classroom orientation.

The Rvwang Learning Centre

Background of the Rvwang People

Originating from the north of Myanmar in the state of Kachin (Figure 3.3), the Rvwang are a minority group in their homeland. In building on a movement to self-identify, the term Rvwang (followers of the middle river) was selected to encompass the numerous groups, which share the same language form, Dulong, again named after a river that many people live near (LaPolla & Yang, 1995). In the 1800s, missionaries brought Christianity to the region where the Rvwang are from, and it is believed that two-thirds of the people follow the faith (Smith & Allsebrook, 1994). This is in contrast to the Burman (Barma) group, who make up 60% of the population in Myanmar and who also hold most of the control in the country.

The missionaries also brought a writing system based on the Roman Alphabet (Kipgen, 2015), which was adapted and became the written form for the Rvwang language. This also differentiates the group from many others in the country as the script used differs greatly to the script used for the Burmese language. Aside from language, and faith, the Rvwang have a strong sense of ethnic symbolism which is used in their clothing so as to differentiate themselves from

other groups. While clothing adorning this ethnic symbolism is less than in the past, traditional clothing is still worn during cultural events even in Malaysia.



Figure 3.3: Kachin State, Myanmar (Google Maps, 2019)

Although a relatively small group in the state of Kachin, they have been caught up in numerous conflicts between insurgents and the Myanmar government since the 1960s. The result of these conflicts includes over 100,000 people being displaced, some of whom fled overland through Thailand and into Malaysia to find safety and the possibility of resettlement.

The Learning Centre

The Rvwang learning centre was established in Malaysia in 2014. There are around 34 students who attend the centre with ages that range from 2-15 years old. The centre has four full-time ethnic Rvwang teachers who teach using the ethnic Rvwang language. The centre is non-secular and incorporates the Christian faith into the school's daily routine with time for prayer and religious studies. Located directly above the centre on the second floor is a chapel. Services are held on Sundays and Mondays, during which time the children attend Christian religious education classes in the learning centre while their parents attend the church service.

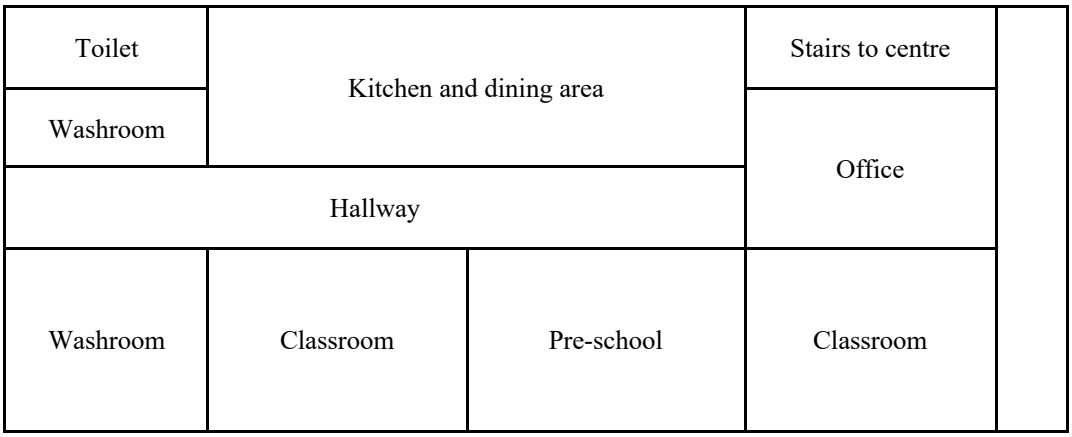


Figure 3.4: Rvwang Learning Centre Floor Plan

A floor plan for the centre is presented in Figure 3.4. There are three main classrooms and an area for mealtimes. The rooms for many of the classrooms are windowless, so air conditioning units provide ventilation. The only window is located at the front of the building (to the right of figure 3.4) and faces the high street below. There are no distinguishing features to alert or guide someone to the exact location of the centre, which means it can blend into the background and not be identified. Access to the centre is via a flight of stairs, at the top of which is a steel gate that can be locked. The centre is largely funded by a fee that parents pay

either weekly or monthly, and by donations from representatives in the Rvwang community, as well as NGOs and local charities. The UNHCR in Malaysia did subsidise teacher salaries, but this practice stopped in 2016 due to monetary constraints most likely caused by the diversion of funds to conflict areas in Syria.

The Mon Learning Centre

Background of the Mon People

Sharing the same name as the state from which they are from, the Mon homeland is located in the south of Myanmar (Figure 3.5). The Mon can trace their history back almost two thousand years. They are largely credited with introducing Theravada Buddhism into the region (Ibrahim, 2018), and their history goes back to the sixth century (South, 2003). Since 1962, the Burmese government has

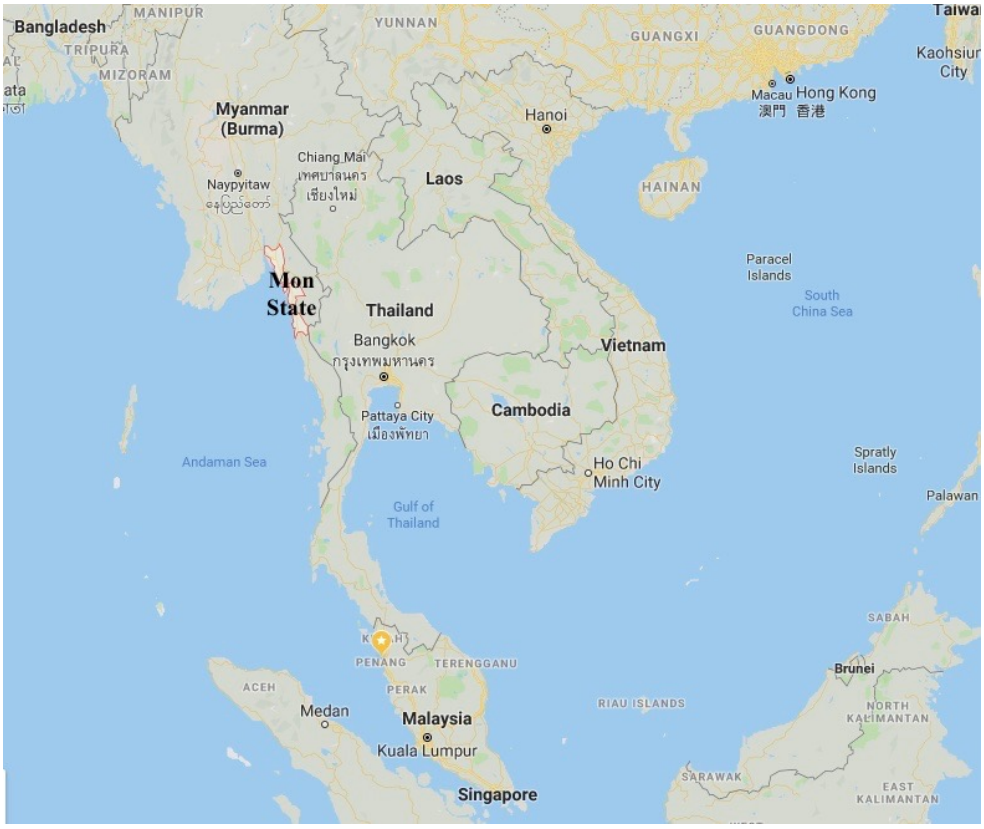


Figure 3.5: Mon State, Myanmar (Google Maps, 2019)

pressured the Mon to assimilate by suppressing aspects that do not conform with a prescribed version of a national Burmese identity, such as Mon language and culture (South, 2003). This coercion from the Burmese government has led to the creation of a Mon nationalist movement with an objective to create an independe--nt Mon-land, based on an ethnic self-identity (South, 2003). Mon influence can be found all over South-East Asia with faith, language and cultural impact felt in neighboring Cambodia, and Thialand. The Sheldrake which is a cultural symbol can be found adorned on flags, clothing and serves to distinguish the Mon both as an ethnic group and as a political movement. While the Mon share the same faith as the dominant Burman, (Barmar) group, their long cultural history, language and influence in the region serves to provide a point of contrast to other groups.

The Mon Learning Centre

Representatives from the Mon community in Malaysia began organising classes in the Mon learning centre on Saturdays, before establishing a full-time school in 2008. Currently, there are 35 students at the centre, 32 of whom board as their parents work in the rubber plantations in the north of Malaysia, and in the fishing industry in western Malaysia. The ages of the students who attend the centre range from 5 years old to 15. Those under 5 and over 15 must be enroled in centres that are not managed by other ethnic groups, which means the language faith is in stark contrast to what is practiced in the Mon centre. There are four full-time male, ethnic Mon teachers, who teach in the Mon language, as well as two support staff who are women and assist with cooking and caring for the children. Figure 3.6 is a floor plan for the Mon centre, which is located throughout three floors.

Third Floor

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Sleeping area</td><td rowspan="2">Open space
and buddhist Shrine</td><td rowspan="2">Window facing high street</td></tr>
<tr><td>Kitchen</td><td>Open space</td></tr>
</table>

Second Floor

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Sleeping area</td><td>Sleeping area</td><td>Classroom</td><td>Office</td><td rowspan="3">Window facing high street</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Washing and toilet area</td><td rowspan="2">Classroom</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Stairs</td><td>Classroom</td><td>Classroom</td><td>Classroom</td></tr>
</table>

First Floor

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Shower and Toilet area</td><td colspan="2">Sleeping Space</td><td rowspan="2">Mon Organisation Office</td><td rowspan="3">Window facing high street</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Mon Organisation Office</td></tr>
<tr><td>Laundry Area</td><td>Computer room</td><td>Stairs</td><td>Classroom / Meeting space</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 3.6: Mon Learning Centre Floor Plan

The Mon learning centre is non-secular and incorporates Buddhist practices into its daily routine. A small Buddhist shrine can be found on the third floor, and a Buddhist temple occupies the fourth floor, which is used by the students in the centre and representatives from the Mon community. The centre can be found in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, minutes from the main shopping and business districts. There are no signs or notices to demarcate the location of the centre, and access to the first floor requires a person to walk up a flight of stairs, to which they are met

by a large metal gate. Funding for the centre comes from fees that parents pay and donations from NGOs and local charities. The UNHCR in Malaysia did subsidise teacher salaries, but this practice stopped in 2017 due to budgetary constraints.

The Rohingya Learning Centre

Background of the Rohingya People

Rakhine state, or as it was previously known, Arakan, is situated in the west of Myanmar (Figure 3.7). The state shares a partial border with Bangladesh and is home to an estimated eight-hundred thousand Rohingya (Green, 2013). The exact origin of the Rohingya people is a highly contested and contentious issue. Leider (2014) claimed that a Rohingya identity was constructed after World War II in order to assert political goals based on a separate ethnic identity, which would differentiate them from other ethnic groups in the region. In a country with 135

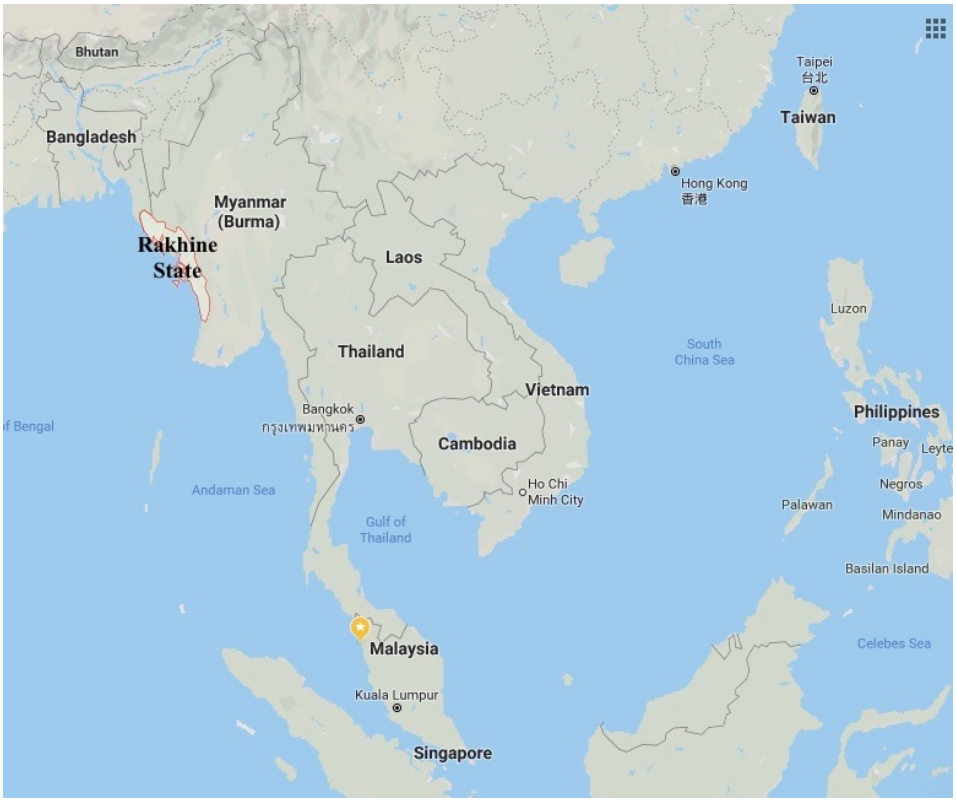


Figure 3.7: Rakhine State, Myanmar (Google Maps, 2019)

different ethnic groups, the Rohungya as Muslims are distinct in the country given their attachment to their religious identity. This includes the manner in which they pray, the celebration of religious events, and the clothing which is worn. These ethinic differences has led the Rohungya to be one of the most persecuted ethnic groups in Mynamar in recent years.

Chan (2005) claimed the term Rohingya was coined by Bengali Muslim intellectuals in the 1950s, suggesting the Rohingya are decedents of people from Chittagong, which is in present-day Bangladesh. The annexation and later integration of Rakhine into Burma by the British designated the then ethnically diverse residents of the region to be part of an even larger number of ethnic communities in the country (Ibrahim, 2018). In 1962, all Rohingya-based political and social organisations were forbidden by the Burmese government after years of tensions between the two groups (Ullah, 2011). In the years that followed, the Rohingya were excluded from a national registry, resulting in over 200,000 Rohingya leaving for Bangladesh (Ullah, 2011). They faced expulsion from the country by the military in 1977 and 1992 (Abdelkader, 2014; Thawnghmung, 2016), and were stripped of any form of citizenship and deemed to be Bengali in 1982 (Thawnghmung, 2016). To escape persecution in Myanmar, many Rohingya have fled to Malaysia, a place that would allow them to practice maintaining their religious identity (Azis, 2014).

The Rohingya Learning Centre

The Rohingya learning centre was established in 2016 and caters to approximately 100 students from 3-18 years old. Of the 100 students, 30 live in the

centre due to family members working far away, with a limited number who are orphans and were taken in by the centre. There are five teachers at the centre, only one of whom is ethnic Rohingya. The remaining four teachers, two of whom are paid and the remaining two volunteers, are Malaysian nationals, who use Bahasa Malay (the national language of Malaysia) as the main language for classroom communication. Figure 3.8 is a floor plan outlining the three floors that the centre occupies.

Second Floor

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Classroom</td><td>Stairs</td><td>Classroom</td><td>Classroom</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Library</td><td colspan="2">Sleeping Area</td></tr>
</table>

First floor

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Toilets and Washing area</td><td>Stairs</td><td>Office</td><td rowspan="2">Classroom</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table>

Ground Floor

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Kitchen and washing area</td><td>Stairs</td><td rowspan="2">Classroom and Lunch area</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Open space</td></tr>
<tr><td>Meeting area</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 3.8: Rohingya Learning Centre Floor Plan

The Rohingya learning centre is non-secular where it follows the Islamic faith and provides time during the day for students to pray in the large classroom space on the first floor. The centre is located on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, with access granted from the ground floor, which doubles as a classroom and space for lunch. The centre has a policy whereby students who attend do not have to pay, so funding for the centre comes entirely in the form of donations from charities, NGOs, and the fundraising that the centre does via sponsorship or from well-wishers.

Table 3.6 below collates and summarises the pertinent information presented in the previous sections for each of the learning centres and includes information including when the centres were established, the number of students and their ages, as well as data on teachers and primary languages used in each centre.

	The Rvwang	**The Mon**	**The Rohingya**
Established	2014	2008	2016
Total Number of Students	34	35	100
Total number boarding	0	32	30
Ages	2-15	5-15	3-18
Number of Ethnic Teachers	4	4	1
Number of Non-ethnic Teachers	0	2	4
Payment	Monthly fee	Monthly Fee	Free
Primary Language	Rvwang	Mon	Bahasa Malay

Table 3.6: Overview of the Three Learning Centres

Access

Gaining access to the learning centres was initially facilitated through the UNHCR in Malaysia and then a key informant. The UNHCR provided the researcher with access to a list of all the learning centres that had registered with them. In conjunction with a UNHCR officer who has worked with the learning centres for many years, the researcher identified possible centres that met the sample criteria. In total, 20 centres were identified and emailed to discover if they would be open to participating in the study. Seven of these replied, including the Rvwang, Mon, and Rohingya learning centres. Upon hearing about the study, two of the centres decided that it would not be the best time for them to participate. The researcher met with the two remaining centres; however, a decision was taken not to work with each of them because the researcher perceived the lack of interest in joining the study. In light of this, the researcher decided that it was more prudent to search for centres that had an interest in working with study, so as not to seem as if any centre was being coerced into something that they might not regularly agree to (see the section of ethical considerations for a more detailed discussion).

Key informants were vital to obtain access to the communites themselves. Outlining their importance, Fetterman (2008) states that key informants can bridge the cultural divide between the community and researcher, and provide information on everyday behaviour. Ultimately, Fetterman (2008) argues that interviewing each and every individual in the community would be challenging, so focusing on a few select informants would prove to be more beneficial. Working with vulnerable communities such as the ones in this study required building trust and the only way to do this was through a key informant. That said, ethical issues can arise with this and are discussed later in the section on ethics.

Step	Access Procedure
1	Centres identified based on sample criteria
2	Each centre is emailed to request a meeting for potential involvement
3	Email acceptance from learning centres
4	Initial site visit to learning centre to assess the potential for research involvement
5	Follow up email from the researcher to confirm involvement
6	Second visit to centre to negotiate consent and access schedule
7	Confirmation of consent and access schedule

Table 3.7: Access Procedure

An access procedure was developed and is presented in Table 3.7. There were seven steps in total that began with an initial email to explain the study and asked if the centre would be interested in hearing more about it. When an email was received from a centre, the researcher organised an initial meeting to discuss the study and to assess if the centre would be suitable both from an ethical and a sampling standpoint. A follow-up email was then sent to arrange for a second visit, after which the researcher explained the consent process and negotiated the best days and times to access the centre. With both parties satisfied, a final confirmation was agreed upon, access to the site was granted, and fieldwork commenced. There was also a procedure followed for leaving each site. Firstly, a debriefing meeting was set up to discuss the ending of the project and for the researcher to be available to answer any questions before his departure. During the meeting the researcher also made clear what would happen next in terms of data analysis and write up. After the researcher completed the leaving procedure, contact with each centre was maintained via email to check in and update the centre on the progress of the research. This procedure was repeated for each centre.

Timeline

Initial emails were sent out to learning centres in June and July of 2016 to assess the level of interest from centres who would perhaps consider participating in the study. During this time, ethical procedures were being formalised, and ethical approval was sought from Nottingham University to proceed with the study. Once approval was granted, the researcher set up informal meetings with the learning centres that responded to the initial email. One of the first places to answer the email was the Rvwang centre, and a meeting was set up on the 3rd of September 2016 to explain the study and establish if the centre would be a suitable participant. After a discussion on the study, a plan was set out for the researcher to spend the month of September at the learning centre, often visiting 3 days a week to conduct fieldwork and weekends to attend cultural events and ceremonies related to the Rvwang church. The final day of fieldwork was conducted on the 27th of September 2016, and two subsequent follow-up visits were conducted on the 27th of March and the 10th of July 2017.

Contact with the Mon centre was first made in late 2016, and the first face-to-face meeting was held on the 27th of March 2017. In this meeting, the parameters of the study were discussed, and a timeline was agreed upon. Due to other work commitments of the researcher, fieldwork began in the Mon centre on the 28th of June 2017, and continued through until the 27th of July 2017. The researcher then spent 2-3 days per week at the centre observing and teaching classes, with additional days added to conduct interviews. Dates were subject to the availability of the participants, so times and days varied greatly.

The first meeting with the Rohingya centre occurred on the 4th of July 2017, with fieldwork commencing on the 11th of July 2017. Conducting fieldwork at this

centre coincided with the Mon centre, so the researcher split his time between the two places. The researcher spent 2-3 days a week at the Rohingya centre; however, during some weeks, the researcher spent more time at the Mon centre when the Rohingya centre was busy with other events. The last day of fieldwork occurred on the 1st of August 2017.

Year	Time period	Action
2016	September	Fieldwork with Rvwang learning centre
2017	June/July	Fieldwork with Mon learning centre
	July/August	Fieldwork with the Rohingya centre
2018	Duration	Data Analysis
2019	Duration	Write up

Table 3.8: Timeline overview

Since the completion of fieldwork in all three centres, the researcher has remained in contact with each via email. Contact remained so the researcher could keep the centres informed as to the progress of the study, as well as to confirm details or clarify information that needed to be cleared up and/or elaborated upon. Table 3.8 above provides a summarised overview of the timeline for the dissertation with a more detailed version available in Appendix 2.

Pilot Test

An exploratory study was conducted to establish if the research instruments and field study techniques that were designed and created beforehand would be

suitable while in the field. Berg (2001) said that this kind of study could be useful when the research is to be conducted on a larger scale or with more participants. Schensul (2008) added that in order to determine a study's social validity, a study must be piloted in a local setting, as without this, a researcher would not know if the questions being asked are pertinent to the aims of the study. One area to take into consideration is that although this was a pilot study, the participants were still classified as vulnerable, so the research procedures discussed in the section on ethics were adhered to. The pilot study, conducted with the Rvwang learning centre in September 2017 (see Appendix 2 for timeline), provided a number of valuable insights into the research process, which helped to improve research practices.

The first area was the researcher himself, who became a distraction during classroom observation sessions. The classrooms were physically small, with some containing 10 or more children. The researcher's presence was felt immediately and caused the children to lose focus on what they were doing, which affected their behaviour during class time. This became apparent early on by the children focusing on the researcher and not on the tasks they were supposed to be doing. The researcher decided to limit the time in the classrooms at first and to spend more time in less disruptive periods such as playtime and lunchtime until the students became more accustomed to him being with them. Within a few days the researcher was still a distraction, but the novelty of his presence eased a little, and the children were able to go back to their usual routine soon after the researcher entered the classrooms. Lessons were learned from this pilot study, so at the following research sites the researcher spent more time in social areas before entering the classrooms for observation.

Teaching classes in the centres also helped to lessen the impact of the researcher's presence as the students and teachers became used to seeing him around. This meant that when the researcher was in observation mode, his presence in classrooms and around the centres was not seen as so unusual. This also led the researcher to be more involved in activities outside the learning centre, so when he was invited to church services or cultural events, he accepted so that he could get to know the community and provide them with the chance to become familiar with him.

Ethical Considerations

Working with vulnerable groups required the dissertation to be more attentive to the various ethnical needs and challenges that may not simply be addressed by the use of a consent form (Appendix 3) and information sheet (Appendix 4). In order to mitigate these challenges, the study adopted two approaches: the adoption of a model of iterative consent (MacKenzie, McDowell & Pittway, 2007) and a reflexive guide developed by Bailey and Williams (2018) which ensured the regular consideration of the ethical impact of decisions made throughout the course of the study. The following section first outlines potential ethical challenges and discusses how they were mitigated. A separate section discusses the ethical procedures selected for the study and how they were incorporated.

When working with vulnerable and seemingly powerless groups, ethical considerations, which usually feature as a footnote in many studies, must be elevated to equal positioning alongside methods (Dyregrov, Dyregrov & Raundalen, 2000). For Ellis et al. (2007), the role of methods and ethics are inseparable in the

sense that a study without a strong research design may collect invalid results, and this data will be further invalidated if an ethical framework is not implemented and incorporated when the study commences. The dissertation elevates the position of ethics and incorporates it within the research design as an integral component whereby data collection, data interpretation, and theoretical insights are all considered through an ethical lens. The dissertation identified six ethical challenges that were taken into consideration before the study commenced, and ones that remained salient throughout the whole research process.

Positionality

The dissertation aimed to maintain equitable relationships with the participants throughout. To illustrate this, a discussion must first take place on the researcher's ethnic and cultural positionality, and the possible influence this may wield during interview and observation sessions. Milner (2007) argued that an exploration of one's positionality can help to avoid hidden dangers that are seen or unseen. Exploring the researcher's positionality means unpacking aspects that may impact the research process or have adverse effects on the participants. As a white, British male who has been granted permission to be in Malaysia, the researcher has not experienced any of the hardships of the participants. He has access to healthcare, education, and employment and is able to roam the streets free in the notion that he will not be accosted by immigration authorities.

The researcher is privileged by his freedom and is able to make agentic choices. The researcher must be conscious that the participants are not in this position, and therefore he must adapt to the needs of the participants by, for example, holding meetings and interviews in locations that ensure their comfort and safety.

So that positionality does not remain a forethought, reflexivity is recommended throughout the research process (Milner, 2007; Bourke, 2014; Clark-Kazak, 2017). An outline of the dissertation's reflexive framework is presented later. This reflexivity allowed the researcher to continually reflect on his position in the study, especially in research-sensitive areas such as during participant observations and interviews.

Power and Dominance

An underlying issue in this dissertation is the notion of power and dominance, and, more importantly, who possesses it. This theme is seen running through the succeeding points in this ethical discussion. In their book on research methods in education, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) cited the work of Jayaratne and Stewart (1991), who question the seemingly exploitative disposition of a research study that inevitably gains while the researched are left powerless. Though qualitative research methodologies seem to be more humane, Kvale (2006) claimed that exploitation still remains a possibility. Working with refugees requires care, attention, planning, and forethought. The precarious position of the representatives in the dissertation means they are susceptible to oppression and/or exploitation from anyone in a position of power, which given the position of refugees in Malaysia includes the researcher, the general public, the authorities, and media outlets to name but a few. The researcher has no conscious intention of perpetuating either, yet without carefully considering the theoretical, methodological, and ethical approach, the study may inadvertently elevate a position of power and dominance over the very representatives with whom it is working.

Permission

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011) to which the dissertation is aligned, alongside the university's ethical procedures, states that before a study can commence, informed consent must be agreed upon by each participant without any form of coercion. Yet, consent is based on the "…assumption that participants are autonomous, understanding the implication of giving consent and are in relatively equal positions of power with researchers" (MacKenzie, McDowell & Pittaway 2007, p. 302). In the case of the dissertation where participants wielded less power than the researcher, participants are left in a vulnerable position.

For the researcher who may have gained access to participants via a gatekeeper who may hold power and influence, participants are left in an even more vulnerable position and are thus more susceptible to coercion. This makes the process of informed consent more problematic as before an individual signs the paper, assurances have to be made that the person is doing so willingly. Informed consent is a largely institutional procedure that ultimately protects the researcher rather than the participants themselves (Bailey & Williams, 2018). For individuals who have not been exposed to research procedures or hail from countries where legal practices are not often exercised on pieces of paper (Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2005), informed consent might simply be viewed as a formality with no repercussions. The process leaves the dissertation in a sensitive position to ensure that the researcher abided by the ethical procedures set by the institutions while ensuring that the participants were fully aware of what participating in the dissertation actually meant.

Reciprocity

The research process can largely be one-sided, with gains for the participants involved limited (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Munford et al. (2003) in discussing the idea of 'giving back' recognise that as researchers, they were taking something from the people they were studying, and there was a need to readdress the balance of give and take. MacKenzie, McDowell, and Pittway (2007) also reaffirmed this with the notion of reciprocity and question the ethical position of research with refugees that does not at least attempt to give something back in terms of teaching, employment, or scholarships. The idea of reciprocity is fraught with ethical issues for refugee or vulnerable groups, yet it merits consideration given the exploitative undertones of the researcher gaining while the group does not. Reciprocity for vulnerable groups still remains a challenging area. If money is offered to the participants, it could be deemed coercive, especially if the individual is impoverished and has no choice but to take the money. Moreover, if the researcher promises something in return, even if it is not money, this could also be construed as coercive as a vulnerable individual has no choice but to accept.

Morrow (2009) and Graham et al. (2013) called for participants to receive monetary incentives for taking part in research, but stressed that it should be done so within the framework of ethical procedures for each study. In the case of the dissertation, reciprocity presents numerous issues as the participants are vulnerable, impoverished in many cases, and lack basic materials and resources required for their learning centres. In keeping with the authors who called for researchers to give back (Graham et al., 2013; MacKenzie, McDowell & Pittway, 2007; Morrow, 2009; Munford et al., 2003), the researcher addressed reciprocity by volunteering at the learning centres. As a teacher with over 15 years of experience, the researcher

volunteered to teach classes in all three learning centres and to cover for classes when a teacher was unavailable. To this end, the researcher became a full participant observer as he taught classes independently, as well as alongside other teachers. This had a positive impact on the research as it not only showed that the researcher was committed to each centre, but it provided the opportunity for people to acclimate to the presence of the researcher, which in turn increased the level of trustworthiness. As the researcher spent time working in each centre, he was able to meet people and talk to them informally, which helped to make the interview process more comfortable for them. It also meant the researcher was able to see an individual's day-to-day and notice if that person's behaviour changed during the interview sessions.

Access

To gain access to sites, the researcher first established a point of contact within the community. Access to vulnerable groups such as refugees is notoriously difficult (Ellis et al., 2007; Jacobson & Landau, 2003), as their position in countries like Malaysia where they are deemed illegal means making themselves known could make them vulnerable to detection from the authorities which can lead to arrest and detention. While the gatekeepers provided valuable insider knowledge on the community, the researcher first established the role that the gatekeepers played. A common dilemma is for the researcher to be accepted into the community; they need to prove themselves somehow and demonstrate their trustworthiness, which is often assessed by the gatekeeper. Researcers should exercise caution on this very notion because in some communities there are members who may hold positions of power, which allow them to speak on behalf of others who may be

young, female, and/or unable to voice opposition. This creates both ethnical and methodological dilemmas. Paradoxically, without the gatekeeper, access for the researcher would be challenging (Obijiofo et al., 2018), but accessing the learning centres through the gatekeepers means trusting that this person will not use their power to influence or coerce others into assisting with a study that they may otherwise have no interest or desire to participate. This issue will continue to be addressed further in the next section on interviews.

Interviews

Kvale (2006) argued that interviews, the very cornerstone of qualitative inquiry, largely ignore discussions of power relationships concerning this form of data collection. For Kvale, interview questions are still decided by the researcher who has a vested interest in carrying out the study. Even in semi-structured interviews, questions are, to a certain extent, pre-decided, pilot tested, and then used to collect data. Therefore, it falls on the researcher to be aware of the influence that they have during the research process and to implement procedures such as iterative consent that provide research participants with a voice to decide how they want to be interviewed. Power relationships are especially salient during the interview process as access to interview participants is often through a gatekeeper. In a study involving refugees in Australia, Obijiofo et al. (2018) raised the issue of gatekeepers or insiders and noted that they were unavoidable given the cross-cultural sites the researchers were working in and the notion that the researchers were outside of the cultural group. Nevertheless, the authors were aware that this presented an ethical challenge as the gatekeeper may select certain individuals to

speak to the research team, which may impact the data in favour of a narrative desired by the gatekeeper.

Smith (2009) citing Omidian (2000) wrote when working with vulnerable groups who may not trust outsiders, it is often recommended to gain the trust of a small number of individuals within the in-group, rather than a large number of people. This was pertinent for the dissertation as the three sites the researcher was working with contained multiple linguistic groups, which meant, at times, the researcher sought someone to assist with interpretation. On these occasions, as Smith (2009) found, the researcher will have to consult with the gatekeeper, who is often male. The latter presents further issues for the interview process as female participants may feel uncomfortable speaking through a male or may feel unable to speak out if female voices often go unheard in the community. Furthermore, from the researcher's perspective, using an interpreter slows down the interview process, as well as the narrative flow of the participant (Obijiofo et al., 2018).

In the instances discussed previously, trust was an issue. It needed to be a two-way process between both parties, researcher and gatekeeper. With this, the gatekeeper could rest assured the researcher would not bring harm to the community, and the researcher could rest assured that the gatekeeper would not use any coercive tactics or exercise power over their community to assist the researcher. The benefit of identifying trustworthy individuals is that they can "… serve as cultural brokers, act as interpreters during interviews, and provide an insider's viewpoint during data analysis and the writing of the research findings" (Smith, 2009, p. 70). Still, trust is not a clearly defined research methodology or ethnical procedure, so additional measures were required to ensure the ethical standards of the study. This is where a clear ethical framework becomes crucial.

There are innumerable ethical challenges of conducting any study in the field, but they increase ten-fold when done so with vulnerable groups such as refugees. Greater care is required when planning and carrying out a study with these groups, and an ethical framework is required that sets out ethical procedures not only before the study commences, but throughout the research process. The next section discusses how the ethical process was incorporated into the dissertation.

Iterative Consent

In addressing the aforementioned ethnical challenges, a different ethical system was required for the dissertation. The ethical process is often one that is set out before a study begins and is known as procedural ethics. The drawback of this approach is that ethnographic research is not conducted in laboratory conditions, so all eventualities cannot be foreseen or prepared for (Wax, 1977), and situations that are planned for become pure speculation (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). To address these concerns, a system of Iterative Consent (MacKenzie, McDowell & Pittway, 2007) was implemented to provide participants in the dissertation with an opportunity to decide how ethical consent works for them. An ethical goal for the dissertation was to move away from ethical procedures that were more in line with experimental methodologies. Adapted from MacKenzie, McDowell, and Pittway (2007), the dissertation approached iterative consent in four stages (Figure 3.9). In stage one, the researcher sought ethical approval from the institution to which the study is attached, Nottingham University. Once ethical approval was granted by the

institution, the researcher approached the community and negotiated access and consent in

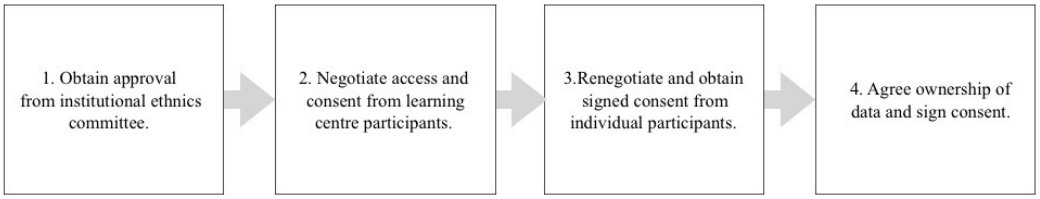


Figure 3.9: An Approach for Iterative Informed Consent (MacKenzie, McDowell & Pittway 2007)

order to begin the study. In stage three, the researcher met each participant to negotiate whether the current informed consent form (Appendix 3) was appropriate, or whether the form needed to be updated to meet that particular person's understanding and definition of how consent will work for them. These meetings covered a variety of topics, such as what could be discussed in the interviews, how information was collected (recorded or notes taken), where the interviews took place, and who was present in these interactions. In the final stage, stage four, the researcher and participant agreed on ownership of the data which had been collected in the interview stage. The researcher and participant agreed on an appropriate ownership arrangement and discussed possible uses for the collected information. The key to iterative consent is that the participant has the power to negotiate rather than acquiesce and be a recipient of a process of consent that is pre-decided. Iterative consent alone was not enough to address the ethical concerns of this study. It was incumbent for another process to be implemented to further ensure that throughout the study ethical concerns were considered and addressed where necessary. Reflexivity provided the study with a process for this to occur.

Reflexivity

In addition to iterative consent, an approach was needed to maintain ethnical awareness throughout the study. To do so, key reflexive areas for fieldwork researchers were developed (see Bailey & Williams, 2018) that suggested the continuous need be reflexive about ethical challenges while researching refugee education. The core theme of reflexivity is the awareness of the influence that the researcher has on the social environment (Linstroth, 2008; Smith-Sullivan, 2008). In the case of the dissertation, it was an awareness of the ethical impact that the presence of the study may have on the learning centres and the participants who are both directly and indirectly involved. As with iterative consent, the study remained reflexively open during the course of the research. A reflexive log (Smith-Sullivan, 2008) was kept in which the researcher critiqued and reflected on the various stages of the research process. The key reflexive areas used in the dissertation were access and gatekeepers, consent, reciprocity, confidentiality, and included power and dominance and interviews (Bailey & Williams, 2018).

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) noted that reflexivity can assist when a researcher is presented with an ethical dilemma. The inclusion of the key ethical areas meant the study had identified areas of concern to remain reflexive; however, this is not to say that the study disregarded other areas that may have arisen. The key areas simply acted as an avenue in which to begin and maintain a reflexive discussion. The reflexive log was completed after each fieldwork session once the observation notes for the day had been written out. This allowed the researcher to recap and reflect on the day's events and then make notes on what was observed and areas of concern. The reflexive log then continued after the completion of

fieldwork to ensure the researcher remained reflexive through the data analysis and write up stage.

Incorporating iterative consent and a reflexive log does not shield the dissertation from all ethical eventualities. Nonetheless, they are tools that were used to further ensure that the dissertation followed a set ethical framework so that the participants involved were not viewed as recipients of an ethical process but as participants in it. One other area of concern was reactivity, which the following section addresses and proposes how it can be mediated with the use of the reflexive tools previously discussed.

Reactivity

It has been noted by a number of researchers that there is a danger for qualitative researchers in the field to influence or somehow change the behaviour of the people that are being studied (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Hammersley, 2006; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Jacobson & Landau, 2003; McKechnie, 2008). This is referred to as reactivity, and Cohen (2011) stated that "…to ignore our own effect on the people with whom we work… assumes that our informants are much more homogenous and passive than they are" (p. 285). McKechnie (2008) suggested that reactivity can increase when there is direct involvement in the study, particularly when the researcher's gender, age, or ethnicity is different. While the participants were informed as to the aims of the study and had the option not to participate or withdraw, the presence of the researcher had the potential to influence the social environment that was being investigated. However, due to the 'novelty effect' (McKechnie, 2008) and the number of volunteers who had worked at the learning centres previously, the level

of influence was greater at first. Then, as individuals in the learning centres grew more accustomed to the researcher's presence, this lessened.

Trustworthiness

Following an interpretive epistemology, concepts of reliability and validity do not necessarily apply to a study such as this. Nevertheless, any research is required to show how its data and findings can be trusted and show they are empirically sound. This dissertation incorporated Guba's (1981) criteria for the assessment of trustworthiness as an alternative to reliability and validity. The concept of reliability and validity are central to positivist research designs with the former referring to the extent to which results can be replicated and repeated (Golafshani, 2003), and the latter referring to the accuracy of the research instrument and application of research methods (Noble & Smith, 2015). In qualitative inquiry, though, these concepts are often not transferable when associated with non-experimental research designs. Adapting reliability and validity was problematic for the dissertation. Firstly, reliability relies on the replication and repetition of results, which would not be possible as the uniqueness of the phenomenon cannot be reconstructed (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

This is a salient point for the dissertation, which seeks to investigate learning centres that are not permanent structures themselves. Validity presented an equally difficult challenge in this study as the researcher must remain an objective bystander who does not interfere with the research subjects. The interpretivist epistemological position of the dissertation combined with an interactionism theoretical framework meant that the researcher had to 'get inside' (Blumer, 1969) to collect data from the point of view of the participants. As a participant-observer,

the dissertation could not conform to a traditional understanding of validity. Researchers have thus suggested that studies in the field of qualitative inquiry adapt the concepts of reliability and validity as a suitable reaplacement (Golafshani, 2003; Noble & Smith, 2015; Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). the dissertation replaced reliability and validity with credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981). These are explained in relation to the dissertation in the following section using Shenton's (2004) suggestions for the implementation of Guba's (1981) criteria.

Credibility

The study replaced internal validity with credibility and provided five provisions (Guba, 1981). Ensuring that there was a level of confidence that the data in the dissertation were collected and recorded accurately required a number of provisions to be employed, some of which have been discussed in previous sections of this chapter. The provisions incorporated in the dissertation are below in Table 3.9.

	Provision	**Application**
1	Recognised research methodology	Structural Interactionism Critical Ethnography Grounded Theory
2	Ethnical Framework	Iterative Consent & Reflexivity
3	Multi-Sited Ethnography	Data collected from three separate sites
4	Two-layer data analysis	Inductive and deductive
5	Pilot Test	Instrument and methods check

Table 3.9: Credibility Provisions

Combining a recognised research methodology applied a framework to the study, with the provision of grounded theory providing a systematical approach to the collection and coding of data. As well-documented applications, these can be easily replicated by future studies. The ethical framework further ensured the data that was collected and analysed was processed through an ethical system. The reflexive element attached to this ensured that this process was on-going and was not only limited to the planning stage of the study. The collection of data from three separate locations means theories constructed from the dissertation are not limited to one site and can be subjected to a cross-comparative analysis to identify relationships and outliers, which can be further investigated. A two-layer analysis further adds to this by placing the data in a system in which it is analysed by two separate methods, one which is based on themes that emerge from the data, the other that is based on pre-existing themes identified in the literature. Finally, piloting the study allows for the research design to be tested and scrutinised in the field. From this, improvements and adjustments can be made which can improve the research design and filter out possible limitations.

Transferability

External validity was replaced by transferability, on which Guba (1981) stated that it is not for the study to create generalisations that are applicable to all situations, but rather it is to create a working hypothesis which may be transferred between different contexts. To do so requires the study to create rich and dense background information on the study participants in order for other studies to explore the possibility of transferability (Krefting, 1991). This dissertation provided a detailed write up of each research site with descriptions of the learning centre and

background of the representatives they serve in this chapter. Doing this allows future studies to look for relationships and divergences to their own research locations and participants.

Dependability

This dissertation replaced reliability with dependability (Guba, 1981), of which there were two methods employed. The first was by a detailed write up of the methods used. This chapter presented a research design and discussed the various aspects incorporated into the study should another researcher decide to adapt or recreate the study's parameters. The second method incorporated in the dissertation and suggested by Krefting (1991) was a code-recode procedure. Each data set were subjected to a process of inductive coding following grounded theory procedures (Charmaz, 2006), followed by a second layer of analysis through which the data were coded deductively. This allowed the study to analyse the results from each coding procedure and identify relationships and discrepancies that could be further explored and analysed.

Confirmability

In the context of the dissertation, confirmability replaced objectivity (Guba, 1981). In addressing confirmability, the dissertation employed three methods: triangulation, reflexivity, and trial audit. The study utilised data that were collected from three separate sites and conducted interviews with a cross-section of representatives from the learning centres that included viewpoints from students, parents, teachers, and community leaders. In addition to this, data were collected from the researcher's observations and field notes while in the field. Moreover, the

researcher kept a reflective diary as a method to remain critical to the approaches taken, and how the data were collected and analysed. Finally, the study included diagrams of trial audits to allow future studies to follow how data were collected, analysed, and how theories were created.

Data Analysis

The researcher developed a two-layer inductive and deductive approach for the analysis of the data in order to increase the credibility of the findings and themes generated. Data collected from each learning centre was analysed separately, with the data from student interviews clumped together as one data set for analysis. The same procedure was used for interview data collected from the teachers, parents, and community leaders.

The first inductive layer contained two parts, initial coding and focused coding, and was based on coding procedures suggested by Charmaz (2006). Initial coding procedures involved coding each line of interview transcripts, field notes, and observations individually. This was done upon the completion of each interview as it allowed the study to identify "implicit concerns and explicit statement" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 50), which could then be used to inform and guide future interviews. Each line was coded based on what was presented.

The dissertation did not develop theoretical insights during this stage as the aim was to remain close to the data and code what was presented. The second part of the first layer incorporated focused coding. While the aim of initial coding is to remain open to new insights into the data, focused coding involves identifying the most frequent or salient themes identified in the initial code and developing these further. Using NVivo software to analyse the data, the study was able to develop

the initial codes into clumps, which then developed into larger themes. These were then developed into theoretical codes that showed the relationships between the themes developed during the focused coding of the data.

The second deductive layer was analysed based on themes that were generated during the literature review in Chapter 2. With these themes placed into NVivo, each data set was then analysed and matched to the selected themes. There was still room for exploration in the deductive layer of analysis, yet the pre-selected themes formed the base from which the analysis was conducted. The inclusion of the second layer of analysis provided the study with a process by which to compare two different coding processes. From the cross-comparative analysis of the themes generated from both layers, the researcher was able to identify relationships and divergence, which led to theory development, and/or further enquiry where there were significant differences.

To further explore and examine the data in more detail, the dissertation incorporated a number of analytical lenses through which to analyse and critique the data (Table 3.10). Using these lenses provided a theoretical underpinning for the data to be analysed and point of contrast to studies that have been conducted.

Chapter	Analytical Lens
Chapter 4	Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice (ITTP) (Stephan & Stephan, 2013)
Chapter 5	Imagined Communities (Anderson, 1983), and adaptions by Norton (2001), and Kanno (2003)
Chapter 6	Two-dimensional acculturation model (Berry, 1997) language maintenance and shift (Fishman, 1964) Core Values (Smolicz, 1981)

Table 3.10: Analytical Lenses per Chapter

Overview

By adopting an interpretivist stance, the dissertation is nestled in the worldview of the participants and how they interpret the social world around them. To explore these interpretations, structural interactionism was adopted as it explores how structures operate through groups and individuals. The central structures for the dissertation were three refugee learning centres in Malaysia, with each representing a group that is linguistically, religiously, and culturally distinctive, yet from the same country. Using a multi-sited ethnography, the researcher collected data from three separate sites in the form of interviews, observation, and field notes. The participants in the dissertation live in Malaysia, which is hostile to their presence in the country. Therefore, ethical procedures outlined in this chapter were utilised to ensure the participants' safety as well as their involvement in the study not as passive recipients but agents in the research process whose views constitute towards knowledge and theory construction. To ensure the data were rigorously analysed, and conformed to the study's interpretation of trustworthiness, a two-layer, inductive, deductive analysis was carried out. The data were then subjected to numerous analytical lenses to anchor it to existing theoretical insight. The first site of the study became the pilot and led to a number of changes being made, which improved the research practice through amendments made to fieldwork and the research instrument. The following chapters, 4, 5, 6, present the findings from this dissertation under the titles of Protection (Chapter 4), Identity (Chapter 5), and Acculturation (Chapter 6).

Chapter 4 – Protection

Introduction

Protection is a broad area with numerous definitions and applications. So, to be able to offer a point of contrast to the refugee perspective of protection, this introductory section explores how the subject is conceived in mainstream education. The notion of protection for children is a relatively recent conception. Citing Ariès ([1960] 1986), Gittins (2009) explained that during medieval times the child entered the adult world as soon as they could function without the constant need for the mother or carer. It was not until the late 19th to the early 20th Century that the conceptualisation of the child began to change (Steedman, 1990). In the context of the U.K., an early act to provide increased protection for girls, the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, increased the age of consent from 12 to 16, which made it illegal for older men to harass younger girls (Kehily & Montgomery, 2009). Fast forward 84 years, and the most significant step came with the Children and Young Persons Act of 1969 that introduced welfare and increased the age a child was criminally responsible from 10 to 14 years old (Monk, 2009). Rather than punish what eventually became understood to be youthful rebellion, the framework led to a greater emphasis on protection and guidance rather than guilt and punishment (Monk, 2009). It is here that we can see a shift in how the child is perceived in society, and through the expansion of welfare services and media interpretations of childhood innocence, children became vulnerable and thus needed to be protected (Buckingham, 2009).

Gradually, as conceptions of children changed and state intervention in child welfare increased, protection became an integral part of educational institutions with frameworks constructed and updated regularly to outline how

schools, teachers, and administrators must create a safe environment for all children under the age of 18 years old (see HM Government, 2018; Department of Education, 2018; National Assembly for Wales, 2018). These frameworks address issues covering a wide range of threats from physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, neglect, exploitation, homelessness, harm from peers or family members, the prevention of radicalisation, and in recent years, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Within this context, the educational institution is not only a place for subject-orientated learning—it provides a direct connection to child welfare services where threats to children are reported.

The conceptualisation of childhood becomes far more nuanced when seen from a South-East Asian perspective. In Myanmar, for example, there is an acceptance that studies and chores come before any recreational activity, and it is common for children to join the workforce. Girls are even more disproportionately disadvantaged during childhood in that many are forced into marriage given their low status in these societies and belief that they will not contribute to the community (Scolaro et al., 2015). Countries in South-East Asia such as Myanmar have signed on to international treaties on child protection and safety; however, their Western conceptualisations do not take into account local tribal, religious, and patriarchal interpretations of law which usually supersede international conventions (Scolaro at al., 2015; Jordana, 2016). Clearly there is conflict with how childhood is conceptualised from region to region with McLeod (2008) arguing that childhood is socially constructed and built around gender, class, and ethnic background, among other things. This was important to consider when exploring the learning centres as protection might be approached differently.

In the West, parameters for protection have changed significantly in the last few decades, influenced in part by Women's and LGBTQ+ groups who have called for the creation of safe spaces (Flensner & Von der Lippe, 2019). This idea has found its way from the public conscious into the school system. Hunter (2008) claims the concept is underdeveloped, but safe spaces have come to be known as spaces where children and students can speak openly on all kinds of positions and perspectives in a hostile-free environment that is without judgement (Barrett, 2010; Flensner & Von der Lippe, 2019). This represents an evolution in the protective role of the school to one that ensures physical and emotional safety, as well as the provision of safe spaces. In the last 100 years the U.K. has changed its stance on how the child is conceptualised and expanded that protective mandate to educational institutions. Contrasting the protective measures put in place in U.K. schools, this chapter explores how protection is conceptualised by the refugee participants in the dissertation and the role and function the learning centres play in ensuring a safe environment is maintained.

From the perspective of a refugee, danger is all-encompassing and takes many forms. As outlined in Chapter 2, these risks include the threat of physical harm from criminals, gangs, or authorities who may arrest and detain individuals who are deemed illegal immigrants. What is more, the constant threat of danger may have physiological repercussions for both parent and child due to the stress involved with living in an unfamiliar new environment. Another aspect that can drive risks is how refugees are perceived and accepted by the host nation. Refugees and immigrants are often conveyed through the media negatively and as a threat to the country in which they reside (Esses & Medianu, 2013; Leudar et al., 2008; Pugh, 2004; O'Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007; Van Dijk, 2000). This is evident in Western

media (Van Dijk, 2000) with Leuder et al. (2008) identifying hostile themes in the U.K. media which associated refugees and immigrants as being "an economic drain, having the potential for criminality and lacking in human qualities such as the ability to care for children" (p. 199). Research has found that the Malaysian media presents refugees in a similarly negative light by representing them as illegal and thus delegitimising their position, as well as reporting that they are a problem population, all for the purpose of supporting the government's stance on refugees (Don & Lee, 2014). This is of course not the case with all media outlets; however, the negative stereotyping or representation of refugees may in itself create another threat refugees have to manage.

In regard to these potential dangers, the aim of this chapter is to explore how the learning centres respond to and manage threats, perceived or otherwise. Presently schools for refugees are considered to be protective spaces (Sinclair, 2001; Nicolai & Tripplehorn, 2003). These conceptualisations are from a previous era and designed for a time when camp settings provided the bulk of protection for refugees. In this age and time, urban environments and protracted situations are the realities of refugees, so exploring how learning centres manage this will address a gap in the research. The chapter explores how ethnic safe spaces are constructed in the learning centres and what this means for the children who are enroled there. Investigating this elaborates on previous concepts of protection and demonstrates that threats are not limited to the physical and psychological as constructing a place of cultural familiarity also plays a salient role in creating safe environments. The following section presents the analytical lens used in this chapter and explains how threats to the participants and learning centres are conceptualised.

Analytical Lens: Threat Theory

This chapter explores how dangers are perceived by the participants in the dissertation and how the learning centres employ strategies to mitigate these threats. To do this, threats are framed as Realistic and Symbolic, which is adopted from the Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice (ITTP) (Stephan & Stephan, 2013). This theory has been used primarily to investigate the attitudes of those in the in-group (dominant group in a host nation) toward those in the out-group (refugees, immigrants) (see Croucher, Galy-Badenas & Ruotsalainen, 2014; Gonzalez et al., 2008; Stephan et al., 1998).

Studies using ITTP are often located in countries where refugees have settled, so the aim of this theory is to explore how people in those countries perceive these groups so that community outreach and integration programmes can be developed. The dissertation flips the focus to the out-group who, in the case of the dissertation, are refugees themselves. The aim of this is to explore which threats refugees face and how these threats are managed by the learning centres. This is achieved by looking at two components of the ITTP: realistic and symbolic threats (Table 4.1).

Component	Definition	Example
Realistic Threats	Threat to in-group existence	Physical, well-being, political, soft power
Symbolic Threats	Perceived group differences	Morals, beliefs, attitudes

Table 4.1: Realistic and Symbolic Threats, Stephan & Stephan (2013, p.25)

Within the context of this dissertation, realistic threats include risks associated with physical and emotional harm that may stem from confrontations with criminal gangs, the authorities, or the perception that this could occur. Symbolic threats incorporate aspects attributed to threats against an individual or group's ethnic characteristics such as faith, culture, or language. Using ITTP in this way provides this chapter with an analytical lens through which to conceptualise threats as they are experienced and perceived by refugees in Malaysia. The central focus of this chapter is threats from the perspective of refugees. One other area to consider which is integral to this chapter is how refugees are perceived by Malaysian society as a whole for a point of contrast.

This dissertation did not research the perceptions of Malaysian citizens for their thoughts on refugees, so in its place, Malaysian media will serve to explore how refugees are perceived through messages in mass media. In addition to exploring which threats are faced by refugees, this chapter demonstrates how each learning centre mitigates and manages risks by identifying strategies that are employed by each centre. The forthcoming analysis explores the participants and their respective centres individually before culminating in a general discussion. In each case, realistic and symbolic threats are investigated followed by a discussion of the protective strategy employed by each centre.

The Rvwang Centre Analysis

Realistic Threats

The representatives from this learning centre experienced and discussed a number of external and internal threats that affected them directly. One participant commented, "*When I first arrived, I didn't work, because I didn't have any*

identification. I was scared and didn't even leave my apartment." Another participant compared life in their homeland to life in Malaysia:

> *…in our hometown in Myanmar there was not much of stress. We didn't care about security, we only cared about the authorities. But here we are scared of local people as well as gangsters, and authorities. There is a lot of tension is here*.

As non-citizens, the participants have no legal recourse to seek justice for crimes perpetrated against them. Dangers on the streets are especially worrying for individuals who are single parents or are left alone to care for their child as their partners work long hours or must travel far to do so (Greene et al., 2011). One mother explained her apprehension of being alone with her children and desire to move as her husband was attacked on two separate occasions and his possessions stolen: "*I can't take my kids far away from the apartment and centre, because I am by myself. If my partner is around maybe I could,*" and added that, "*We moved from the old apartment to this new one as it is safer, though it's more expensive*."

Incidents where a person is attacked and money is stolen further exacerbate the anxiety among individuals as there is also pressure to work and make money to pay agents. These individuals smuggle people into the country across the northern border with Thailand and require payment for this service which can be around 4,000 ringgit (1,000 USD). One participant stated, "*The agent knows where you are staying, where you are going, so people are scared of the agent, and they have to pay*." This problem forces parents to choose between staying home to protect their children from criminals and immigration officers, or leaving their children in order to find work and make payments to the agent. It is here that the learning centre plays an integral role, as it provides a safe place for parents to bring their children during

the day so they can work or attend to other errands without the risk of a child accompanying them on the streets. Without the centre, children and teens would be at home alone, or free to roam the streets where one participant feared they could end up involved in illegal activities, stating, "*I worry about teens cause they are on their own then when they go out maybe they will get involved with drugs*." For one participant this was a concern as from their five children, the oldest who are 15 and 17 years old, work to pay the school fees for their siblings who are 12, 10, and 3, respectively. The participant lamented, "*This isn't the best situation, but given our finical situation there is no choice*." The participant's older children work in the centre of the city in a store which requires them to travel across town. This exposes them to a greater risk of being targeted by criminals or picked up by the police as they have to use public transport, such as the bus or train, which leaves them more visible and increases the chances that they could be observed and targeted by criminals or the authorities.

In addition to physical dangers, there are psychological threats that parents have to shield their children from so that they do not take on the stress of the parent. One participant noted, "*Some kids have depression, because they are thinking about the rental fee, but can't approach their parents to talk about it*." In reflecting on the participant's own situation, they say,

> *Kids can read our face, like we are a mirror for them. I have to be careful to not show how I'm really feeling. When I'm sad my daughter will ask, why are you sad? So, I try to hide my feelings in front of the kids*.

When asked how the participant would cope without the centre, the response was quick: "*I would feel totally insecure*." In line with a number of studies (Avery & Said, 2017; Bellino & Dryden-Peterson, 2018; Devine, 2015; Dryden-Peterson,

2010; Karanja, 2010; Zeus, 2011; UNHCR, 2004), the Rvwang learning centre provides protection from physical harm as well as providing reassurance to parents that while in the centre their children will be safe. The dangers on the outside are numerous, but the learning centre might be the one place where they can play and be safe from these threats.

Symbolic Threats

An area that receives greater attention in Chapter 5 is the notion of identity, but this section explores it in relation to its protection. The fear is that the Rvwang identity may be lost, consumed, or potentially replaced by another. In terms of faith one participant noted, "*They* (young members) *don't know where our church is, where our community is, who are our relatives, or the Rvwang people*." The participant's concern is that a Rvwang individual may turn to another church or even to another religion. Located nearby are other refugee communities who have established their own chapels to serve representatives from their own communities.

If a Rvwang individual did attend a non-Rvwang church, they would become surrounded in a different faith and exposed to a different language. Language is an integral part of the Rvwang identity, and there are concerns over its survival. One participant stated, "*Now there [are] some parents that make it very hard to maintain the language, because some are married with a different people and their children do not learn the language properly*." This means the child is exposed to numerous languages, which the participant feels may impact the Rvwang language. This concern was greater before the Rvwang learning centre was established as, one participant noted, "*A lot of Rvwang went to the Kachin school, but at that time it was very difficult to teach our own language*." The Kachin school

is managed by an ethnic group whose language is different from that of the Rvwang's. Therefore, while in this school, Rvwang children were immersed in a Kachin identity consisting of the Kachin language and faith. The Rvwang centre was established to ensure the Rvwang identity was protected and not subsumed by the more dominant Kachin culture.

For many parents, the priority of a child's safety would most likely take precedence over language or identity preservation. Nevertheless, there is a nuanced argument to be made here on the idea of ethnic safe spaces as discussed in Chapter 2. Karanja (2010) found that children felt a sense of safety among those with the same cultural background, while other researchers have noted that schools can be a safe space to practice ethnic identity (see Mirza & Reay, 2000; Creese & Martin, 2006; Creese et al., 2006; Wei, 2006; Kwong, 2011). The Rvwang centre provides another dimension to this as it functions as a place to protect the Rvwang ethnic identity and ensure it is not influenced by other ethnic groups. The rationale for this protectionism will become more apparent in Chapters 5 and 6. The walls of the centre provide a physical boundary that shields those inside from the dangers and threats of the world outside. How this is achieved is discussed in the next section, which explores the learning centre's protective strategies.

Protective Strategy

To mitigate realistic and symbolic threats, the Rvwang learning centre utilises two strategies. The first is concealment or invisibility, which ensures the centre remains inconspicuous and undetected. This is achieved with the centre being located on a high street, which is brimming with small shop lots and street stalls, all of which advertise their business in Malay, Chinese, and English—the

major languages found in Malaysia. The centre is located in an enclave with a significant Burmese contingent present. Yet, the illegal position of refugees in Malaysia means that the enclave has to be concealed, for any physical or symbolic representation of their presence would bring undue attention from gangs who may exploit them, or the authorities who may close down the centre or detain those inside. The second strategy can be found in the form of a cultural barrier. Symbolic threats are harder to mitigate as they are unseen and may happen over the duration of stay in Malaysia (see Chapter 6 for a discussion on acculturation). To ensure that these threats are managed, hidden within the concealed enclave an ethnic bubble immerses those inside in the culture, faith, language, and values of the Rvwang. This finding is in line with McMillan and Chavis (1986), who suggested, among other things, that language is used to create a boundary. In the case of the Rvwang centre there is a physical boundary represented by a structure that contains the centre, and a cultural barrier to repel external symbolic threats represented by language. How effective this is remains to be seen, as the Rvwang live among numerous ethnic groups all with distinctly different languages and dialects.

The protective aims are made possible by a strategy of concealment employed by the centre. As a standing structure the centre can safeguard students while their parents are away earning money for the family. The boundary created by the centre ensures that the ethnic Rvwang identity is protected from the outside influences of different faiths and languages. This distinctive identity leaves the students vulnerable while on the outside as they are less able to blend into the wider society and go unseen, though. This is made further evident by the uniform the students wear, which singles them out as not belonging to a state school (see Chapter 6 for a broader discussion on this). Invisibility is a strategy used by many

refugees in urban environments to remain undetected (Sommers, 2001; Grabska, 2006; El-Shaarawi, 2015; Alzoubi et al., 2017); however, the protective strategies employed by the centre inadvertently leave children without the skills to navigate everyday life in Malaysia, where language and an understanding of the culture around them may prove to be useful protective strategies.

The Mon Centre Analysis

Realistic Threats

Protecting students in the Mon learning centre is a full-time concern as many of the students who attend board full-time. This means the protective role that the centre takes on is even more important as it does not stop at the end of the school day. Initially, the establishment of the centre came from a need expressed by parents. One participant stated, "*... [A] lot of parents requested for a school as their children were free to play around the house and were alone.*" The need to work and earn money to cover daily expenses and pay agent fees leaves some parents with no choice but to leave their children at home and unattended, or in the company of a casual acquaintance who may be renting a room in the same apartment. Where possible, parents send their children to nearby learning centres that are managed by different ethnic groups when there is no option for childcare available at home. One participant shared, "*I take my young daughter to a nearby Learning centre when I want to work, and there is no one to take care of her.*" On one occasion during fieldwork, it was observed that some students were playing with a baby. When asked who this child was, the students responded that the mother dropped the child off so she could run some errands. This was preferable to the child accompanying the mother, given the possible threats on the outside.

On another occasion, the researcher observed how a realistic threat was experienced by the teachers and children in the centre. The researcher had spent the morning at the centre and left to get lunch at a restaurant nearby. After 30 minutes, the researcher returned and walked up the staircase to the second floor. Upon reaching the entrance to the centre, which is guarded by a large metal gate, the researcher pressed the doorbell to alert someone to come and unlock the gate. Unusually, nobody came even after the doorbell was pressed a number of times. Another observation was that the lights were off and there was no sound of the hustle-bustle of the centre with children playing, laughing, and running up and down the staircases. After 10 minutes had passed, a person cautiously took a peek from behind one of the walls facing the door. Upon seeing the researcher, the person smiled and immediately called for someone to unlock the gate. The researcher walked to the classrooms on the next floor and noticed the lights were turned off, and some of the teachers from the centre were ushering the children into the classrooms where they urged them to be quiet. Talking to one of the Mon teachers, it transpired that near where the researcher had had lunch, a representative from the Mon community was arrested and detained by the immigration authorities. This location is minutes away from the Mon centre so word got back very quickly, which resulted in the centre going into what can be best described as a lockdown. When the threat was gone, the centre went back to its usual classroom routine, and the noise and hustle-bustle of the classrooms resumed.

The threat of detention or arrest weighs on the minds of parents whose children go to the centre, with one stating that,

> *The country is not safe and it's so difficult to go to school alone and come home alone. If she (my daughter) is 14 or 15 she can walk alone. If it is 30*

minutes away, I will pick her up. I want to see her and follow her until she is 18.

This participant is unique in that only a few students live at home and travel to the centre each day, as the vast majority of the students have parents and family members who work far away, which means they board at the centre. The students' time outside is limited due to the risks involved with being away from the centre. When asked about this, one participated said, "*They don't mind not going outside, but if they do, they stay locally*." The rationale for this is that if a threat is encountered, the centre is located nearby, which provides shelter.

While threats to physical harm are a daily worry, the stress and anxiety of being in a new country and apart from parents also presents a threat to well-being. The students who board may not see family members regularly. One participant noted, *"For some students parents visit every 2 - 3 months or once a year."* The threat that arises from this is the possibility for psychological distress as the children are separated from their family members for long periods of time. A participant reflected about one student in particular who struggled with being apart from her mother: *"One student cries all the time because she misses her mum. She is 10. Her mother visits once a week, but still the girl cries in the class."* For many children the participant claims this is not an issue: *"Some kids don't talk about their parents and are not lonely, because they are playing with their friends."*

The older children addressed the possible threat from emotional distress. During interviews with some of these students, they informed the researcher that in their free time they enjoyed playing with the younger kids in the centre and often did chores to help them. One student shared, *"After class I sweep the floor and wash the clothes for young kids and myself. I like it, because I love the kids and they*

cannot do it themselves." Wanting to help the younger kids in the centre was a common goal shared by all the participants who were interviewed. The older students take on the role of a big sister or brother to the younger children in the centre. They were often observed playing and taking care of the younger children before, in-between, and after classes, and it is here that the older students seem to become an extended family. These temporary family constructions provide a social group and extend the idea of ethnic safe spaces where the children can find a sense of belonging and safety among those who share the same ethnic characteristics.

In addition to the threat of physical harm and well-being, representatives from the Mon centre also fear reprisal from the Burmese government. One participant stated, "*We are afraid the military government will send a spy, so we have to check, and this is why we check people's background before they join*." This threat is more specifically focused on the Mon organisation in Malaysia and its ties to political groups in the homeland; however, as the community's office is located in the same building as the learning centre, the threat is shared. The Mon in Myanmar have been politically active for a number of years (see Chapter 3 for a discussion), and the origins of the Mon community in Malaysia are political as they sought to seek influence from governments around the world to aid their cause for an independent Mon homeland. The Mon organisation are more aligned to education these days, yet a screening process is still in place to identify individuals who may pose a threat to the community and its representatives. Realistic threats for Mon representatives are varied and are not only limited to dangers in Malaysia, but are transnational and originate in the homeland.

Symbolic Threats

In protecting the students from physical and psychological threats, the Mon centre also creates a place in which to protect the Mon identity. For one participant, it is religion that needs to be protected: "*To learn about Mon they must understand Buddhism and culture. Because, if we follow another culture, we will not understand our own*." In the second part of the quotation, the participant understands religion and culture to be one of the same. Previously the participant sent their child to a centre which favoured Christian values, although for the participant this meant the child was missing out on a significant aspect of what it means to be Mon.

Language is also connected to a Mon identity, as one participant stated, "*They never learn Mon language in another school, and it is important she learns her own language*." Another participant elaborated on this sentiment: "*If you don't learn your language, you will be sad. You will see Mon people around you, and because you cannot read and write your language you will be lost.*" There is a sense among the participants that the Mon religion and language must be protected, and the centre plays a crucial role in this process as other centres nearby cater to other ethnicities whose religion and languages differ from that of the Mon. There is congruence in the findings between the Rvwang and Mon centres as there is a notion presented of the centres representing an ethnic safe space. Yet, building on this idea, the Mon and Rvwang learning centres view ethnic safe spaces as a means by which to protect ethnic identity. Again, a discussion on identity will go into greater depth in Chapters 5 and 6, but the fear that identity characteristics will be lost is worth mentioning as a potential threat to these participants due to its consistent emergence in the data.

Protective Strategy

In much the same way as the Rvwang centre, the Mon centre utilises a strategy of concealment. To achieve this, the centre is positioned on a busy high street and located above a restaurant business that occupies the ground floor. There are no discernible features to single out the Mon centre, so it integrates seamlessly into the surroundings. Knowledge of its location is, therefore, only known to the representatives of the centre, and this offers some level of protection from people who may exploit them or authorities that may close the centre down as they are illegal in the eyes of the government. The next protective strategy also mirrors that of the Rvwang centre, whereby the establishment of an ethnic bubble ensures the Mon culture is perserved within the centre, and external symbolic threats can be deflected. The children in the Mon centre spend most of their time indoors with very few opportunities to venture outside until they reach 15 years of age. This leaves the children even more exposed while outside the protective reach of the centre as they are in effect more prepared for life in the homeland than in Malaysia.

The Rohingya Centre Analysis

Realistic Threats

The Rohingya centre protects from a set of challenges that include exploitation from criminals and gangs but also addresses the threat of poverty and malnutrition. The latter is not unique to this group but contrasted to the other groups; it represents a larger social issue for people associated with the Rohingya centre. The centre is located further from the epicentre of the city, though there is still a sizeable refugee population in the area, and the possibility to be arrested and detained is ever-present. If a representative from the learning centre, child or parent,

is taken by the police, there are individuals from the centre who take action. As one participant noted, "*If someone is arrested (name omitted) will go and help if he can help. But, (name omitted) will accept everything.*" In the event that someone is arrested or taken to the hospital for treatment the centre covers any remaining expenses. One participant stated, "*We always consult the UNHCR first. If they are able to pay they will. Otherwise they may only be able to pay half of it, so we have to come up with the rest of the money.*" In addition to exploitation at work and unsafe working conditions, detention is a serious threat, with an estimated 3,000 Rohingya being held in detention centres in Malaysia, and the release process can take many years. The result of this threat is an increased number of single mothers and children who have been abandoned (Azizan, 2016). This has led the centre to provide accommodation for 30 children, some of whom are orphans, and some who live in the centre because their parents work far away.

The centre charges no fee for children to attend and provides lunch each day. The fee is waived in order to encourage more parents to send their children there as it was found that even charging a small fee of 20 ringgit (5 USD) could be a lot to pay at the end of the month. The centre is partnered with a Malaysian NGO, which now helps to fund the centre, and has operated a food bank in the area for a number of years. This provides an invaluable service, because, as one participant shared, "*Without the service it would be hard for families to buy food for themselves*." There are also a lot of families who rely on it, as another participant stated, "*In one month we target 500 families, but this depends on stock. If there is only enough for 200 families, we keep it until the following month.*" In partnering with the NGO and providing the food bank service, the centre is able to encourage families to bring

their children there and, in some cases, help some out of a difficult situation such as providing food and taking in children who are homeless.

Within the walls of the centre, students and families can escape the possibility of detection and exploitation on the outside. Additionally, children can play in a safe environment and get a guaranteed meal each day, no matter the child's age or family's financial situation. The centre is located in a distinctive three-floor building and occupies each floor with the ground floor serving as a classroom, canteen, meeting area, and distribution zone. Outside the school and hung on the wall is a sign that advertises a charity clinic that is located inside, and another sign that invites all Muslims to attend a Ramadan event followed by prayer and to break fast together. For a centre which provides a service to individuals who are deemed illegal in the country, the centre is able to interact with the outside world more openly than the Rvwang and Mon centres. This is due to an additional level of protection that the centre can provide, made possible by the legal standing of the centre afforded by the partnership with a registered Malaysian charity. When asked if the centre had been approached or harassed by the police or immigration authorities, a representative simply said no. A possible reason for this, one representative explained, was "… *because we are a Malaysian company that is registered.*" Partnered with a company that is a registered charity in Malaysia, the centre falls under its purview. This places it in a grey area of being illegal yet able to gain some protection from physical threats posed by immigration authorities in the way of Malaysian citizens who work and manage the charity.

Symbolic Threats

The Rohingya centre presents a more complex picture of symbolic threats than the previous two centres. Where beforehand language and faith were aspects connected to an extended understanding of the ethnic safe space, faith is not under threat in the Rohingya centre. This is because the participants' religion is also the dominant religion in Malaysia: Islam. In fact, Azis (2014) suggests that the Rohingya, who came to Malaysia, chose this country because they were able to retain and protect their religious identity there. Language is a more nuanced area that is unpacked in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, on the surface, if language is as important to the Rohingya as it is the Rvwang and Mon, the main threat to language in the Rohingya centre is its close ties with the host nation, the lack of ethnic teachers, and the presence of Malaysian teachers who use the language of the host nation in place of the Rohingya language. The notion of the ethnic safe space still stands, though it is constructed predominantly around a religious identity rather than one that includes language.

Protective Strategy

Unlike the protective strategies employed by the Rvwang and Mon centres, the Rohingya centre is able to employ a strategy that is drastically different. The centre is partnered with a Malaysian food bank that is a registered charity. Prior to their partnership, the Rohingya centre would simply be viewed as an illegal operation. In partnering with the Malaysian charity, though, the centre finds itself in a legal grey area of sorts. This is the first stage of legitimisation. The next step involves the staff itself at the centre, which is comprised entirely of Malaysian nationals aside from the community leader who is Rohingya and a few helpers. The teachers and admin staff are Malaysian. They are the first point of contact between

the outside world and the Rohingya centre and its representatives. This is an effective protective strategy as the Malaysian staff can speak directly to the authorities and vouch for the people inside if they are ever harassed, which according to reports has yet to happen. If the centre were ever approached, the first impression would simply be of Malaysians doing charity work for people less fortunate than themselves.

The next protective strategy, which is again in contrast to the other centres, is the use of language and clothing. The children in the Rohingya centre learn Malay as the primary language so on the outside the child is more able to remain invisible and blend into the surroundings. This is further compounded by the religious accessories worn by the children in terms of the headscarf for girls and skull caps for boys. These items are worn by many Muslims in Malaysia, and this attire further provides a level of invisibility as to a bystander the child would resemble any other Malaysian Muslim child (see Chapter 6 for a more in-depth analysis). Speaking the language of the host nation has advantages for protection, though this is not entirely why the language is utilised in the centres (see Chapter 5 for a discussion). Within the context of this chapter, though, language and clothing play an important role in the protection of the children on the streets, and the partnership with the Malaysian charity and presence of Malaysian nationals ensures a level of credibility and legitimacy for the centre. On the surface, the Rohingya centre's protective strategies are effective, especially when compared to the other centres. Why the other centres do not follow suit with the Rohingya centre is a far more nuanced and complex discussion that is addressed in this chapter as well as the subsequent chapters.

The previous section explored the realistic and symbolic threats perceived by the participants from the Rvwang, Mon, and Rohingya learning centres. In

managing these threats, the Rvwang and Mon centres have concealed their locations and made their whereabouts known only to those in their immediate group. The Rohingya centre with its connection to a Malaysian charity finds itself in a unique position, as the relationship provides a level of protection for the centre that permits it to function out in the open. The learning centres are very much safe spaces for the children inside, but herein lies the complex nature of protection as it encompasses a wide range of issues from realistic threats to symbolic threats. More analysis and discussion is still required to understand how the centres interpret these threats and to what extent the strategies employed are a response to external factors.

General Discussion

Until now, the integrated threat theory of prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 2013) has been used as a lens through which to explore the perceived threats faced by the participants in the dissertation. The following discussion section explores the relationships and divergence between each centre. This section identifies common threats and strategies, but also demonstrates where the centres differ in their perception of threats and approaches for managing them. Additionally, this general discussion explores how refugees are construed by host nations and the media. Without data collected from Malaysian citizens, this section turns to studies conducted on host nation populations to examine how they perceive threats from refugee and immigrant groups. This data provides a valuable counterpoint for discussion—one that will explore if there are similarities to the perceived threats on both sides and if host nation views of refugees influence protective strategies.

Realistic Threats

Analysing the data from the three centres (Table 4.2), it is clear that crossover exists in terms of the protection from physical harm. Representatives from each centre are threatened by the potential to be targeted by a criminal element who may exploit their vulnerable position, in addition to the threat of detection by local law enforcement. The learning centres counter these threats by providing a safe environment for the children to play and integrate with others who may share similar experiences. In the case of the Rohingya centre, this plays a vital role in providing meals to families, single parents, and orphans who, without this aid, would be left seriously malnourished. These findings are in line with Nicolai and Triplehorn (2003), who suggest that refugee schools offer safe places to play and access to food, without all of which would leave children left unsupervised and to their own devices. In addition to physical protection, the centres function as a place to protect from psychological distress. Living in an unfamiliar country and apart from family members has been seen to increase levels of emotional stress (Oxfam, 2016), and the ability to acculturate to these new conditions further exacerbates negative emotions (Williams & Berry, 1991).

A study by Fazel, Wheeler, and Danesh (2005) found that refugees in western countries are 10 times more likely to suffer from a mental health condition such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than people in the general population. Whether the real threat comes in the form of physical or mental harm, one role of the centres is to provide protection from potential threats in whatever form they may take. This finding corresponds to a study which found that NGO-run schools in Lebanon for Syrian refugees viewed part of their mandate as offering a level of protection for the students (Buckner, Spencer & Cha, 2017).

	Rvwang Centre	**Mon Centre**	**Rohingya Centre**

Realistic Threats	Crime, illegal activities, Police, immigration psychological distress	Crime, illegal activities, Police, immigration, government agents, psychological distress	Crime, illegal activities, Police, immigration, poverty
Symbolic Threats	Identity - faith, language, culture	Identity - faith, language, culture	Identity - language
Strategy	Concealment / Ethnic Safe Space	Concealment / Ethnic Safe Space	Visibility Partnership Legitimacy Ethnic Safe Space
Strategy Effect	Students' identity is protected while inside, yet students are more visible on the outside	Students' identity is protected while inside, yet students are more visible on the outside	Students' identity is adapted while inside, and students are more invisible on the outside

Table 4.2: Overview of Critical Areas of Protection, Strategies, and Outcomes

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The participants in the dissertation shared their experiences of the perceived realistic threats that they encountered. When compared to studies that have researched the attitudes of dominant groups, the threats change somewhat. Croucher, Galy-Badenas, and Ruotsalainen (2014) found that in the context of the dominant group in Spain, participants reported threats related to employment and inflation. These were deemed to be political and economic threats by the researchers in the study. In studies on the attitudes of dominant groups in Spain and Israel (Stephan et al., 1998) and the Netherlands (Gonzalez et al., 2008), realistic threats were found not to be as significant as symbolic threats. While there are perceived

threats felt on both sides, the participants in the dissertation reported a greater level of realistic threats that are related to physical harm, unlike studies by Croucher, Galy-Badenas, and Ruotsalainen (2014) that found the main realistic threat was employment. One rationale for this finding is that citizens of a host society have rights; they are protected by the police, and the state and any crime committed against them can be reported to the police for investigation. In the case of Malaysia, refugees were framed as a realistic threat to society and the economy (Don & Lee, 2014), national security (Bolte & Keong, 2014), and connected to people trafficking and smuggling. Realistic threats are experienced by both refugee groups and host nation citizens. Yet, the form that the threat manifests varies drastically between groups. A threat for the host nation citizens may consist of harm to the economy or the lack of employment; for refugees, perceived threats could include physical and mental anguish that affect not only adults but the young. There is divergence between the level of realistic threats between both groups; however, one threat that was significant for both groups was symbolic in nature.

Symbolic Threats

Threats classified as symbolic were a salient concern for each learning centre. Framed in this chapter, it is possible to explore how the protection of identity and the creation of ethnic safe spaces is a reaction to external threats. The learning centres in the dissertation all value identity, whether it be related to language, culture, or faith, and use the learning centre as a potential soft barrier to prevent outside influence from infiltrating and impacting the identity of the children within. In research on the theory of community, McMillan (1976) asserts that language is used as tool to create boundaries that separate the in-group from the out-group. It is

these boundaries that protect those within from external threats, and these barriers "… separate 'us' from 'them' and allay anxiety by delimiting who can be trusted" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 10)

By separating themselves to protect an ethnic identity, the learning centres in the dissertation address issues that dominant groups have also reported to be a concern. In a study of the acceptance of Muslim immigrants in Spain, Croucher, Galy-Badenas, and Routsalainen (2014) found that individuals who were highly religious were less likely to believe that Muslim immigrants would integrate into Spanish culture. While equal levels of realistic and symbolic threats were found, the potential for a perceived loss of Catholic identity was one reason why immigrants were seen as a threat. The authors suggested, "When members of a dominant culture believe their values/beliefs and their group is threatened in some way, prejudicial reactions are likely to develop in response" (Croucher, Galy-Badenas & Routsalainen, 2014, p. 2). Though this dissertation focused on host nation citizens, there are some parallels to the findings in the dissertation. The perceived need for Spanish Catholics to protect their religious identity is reflected in the findings of this dissertation with a core protective aim of each learning centre to ensure the continuance of their faith. So, in protecting their faith the centres are addressing a threat, which is also felt by the dominant group.

Another study that explored the attitudes of Spanish citizens toward Moroccan immigrants and the attitudes of Israelis toward Russian and Ethiopian immigrants (Stephan et al., 1998) revealed some interesting findings. There were no significant realistic or symbolic threats felt against Moroccans in their study, which the authors speculated may have been due to the small number in the country and the feeling their time in Spain would be short, and thus their impact on the

culture would be minimal. The attitudes of Israelis toward Russian and Ethiopian immigrants were related to familiarity. Despite sharing the Jewish faith, because the heritage of the Russian immigrants was culturally closer to that of the Israelis, the symbolic threat of the Russian immigrants was perceived as lesser than that of the Ethiopian immigrants whose culture was seen as being vastly different.

This finding lends itself to the dissertation as the protective strategies employed by the Rvwang and Mon centres were different from that of the Rohingya centre. Applying the findings from Stephan et al. (1998) to the dissertation, one explanation could be that the Rohingya centre, through its religious background and presence of Malaysian nationals, presents less of a threat to Malaysian society, which provides a little more freedom for the centre to continue. The Rvwang and Mon centres do not have that familiarity, and thus they may be seen as a threat to Malaysian society as well as feel threatened by Malaysian society, leaving the centres to employ strategies of isolation and concealment.

Studies that have incorporated integrated threat theory of prejudice (Stephan et al., 1998; Gonzalez et al., 2008; Croucher, Galy-Badenas & Ruotsalainen, 2014) have shown that host nation citizens perceive realistic and symbolic threats from refugee and immigrant groups. When these findings are compared to the dissertation, it is clear that there are parallels between perceived threats felt by dominant groups and perceived threats felt by the participants in the dissertation. What is more apparent is that while both groups perceive realistic and symbolic threats, these are more identifiable with the Rvwang and Mon centres than the Rohingya centre. This is made evident in the strategies they utilise to ensure that their centres are protected, with the Rvwang and Mon centres concealing themselves entirely as the level of perceived threat against their safety and identity

is higher. The rationale for this is multi-layered and complex and is discussed in greater detail in later chapters. For the purpose of this chapter, protection is key and encapsulates numerous aspects which take into account realistic and symbolic threats. Learning centres identify threats and address them with protective strategies that seek to prevent dangers and risk from befalling them.

Comparing Threats

Threats are a multi-directional force that can affect both refugees and host nation citizens. Table 4.3, presented below, compares the realistic and symbolic threats from the host nation to the individual learning centres. In terms of realistic threats, these are perceived by all groups; however, they are markedly more pronounced for the learning centres given their legal standing in the country. Symbolically, threats are faced by all from the host nation to learning centre as they fear culture or faith will be affected by the presence of the other. The Rohingya centre is the outlier in this as the symbolic threat to their centre is minimal because they share the same faith as the host nation.

	Threats to Host Nation from refugees	**Threats to Rvwang Learning Centre from host nation**	**Threats to Mon Learning Centre from host nation**	**Threats to Rohingya Learning Centre from host nation**
Realistic Threats	Crime, Employment	Crime, detention, psychological distress	Crime, detention, psychological distress	Crime, detention, psychological distress
Symbolic Threats	Culture, Faith	Identity: language, culture, faith	Identity: language, culture, faith	———

Table 4.3: Cross Comparative Look at Realistic and Symbolic Threats Across Groups

Table 4.4, below, takes the information from Table 4.3 and adds the host nation in order to provide a cross-comparison of how each group perceives threats. In terms of realistic threats, each group (Rvwang, Mon, Rohingya, host nation) perceives a level of danger that could threaten safety and includes crime against the other, and in the case of the host nation the loss of employment and effect on the economy if refugees take low paying jobs in the informal job sector. Symbolic threats are where the groups diverge dramatically. The perceived threat to identity is of greater significance for the Rvwang and Mon centres, which protect from the symbolic threat of the loss of faith, culture, and language (see Chapter 5 for analysis on identity construction). The impact on the host nation is minimal. In line with Stephan et al. (1998), the threat to the host nation's faith and language is minimal given the comparatively small number of refugees compared to the national population. The national language and faith are both engrained in Malaysia's government, education, and society, leaving the threat to these as insignificant. The Rohingya centre provides an interesting counterbalance to the Rvwang and Mon centres as the Rohingya centre shares the same faith as the host nation, which ensures the protection of their religious identity.

	Rvwang Centre	**Mon Centre**	**Rohingya Centre**	**Host nation**
Realistic threats	Crime, illegal activities, Police, immigration psychological distress	Crime, illegal activities, Police, immigration, government agents, psychological distress	Crime, illegal activities, Police, immigration, poverty	Crime, employment loss
Symbolic Threats	Identity - faith, language, culture	Identity - faith, language, culture	____	_____
Strategy	Concealment	Concealment	Visibility Partnership Legitimacy	Refugees are deemed illegal, detained, and/or deported

Strategy Effect	Students' identity is protected while inside, yet students are more visible on the outside	Students' identity is protected while inside, yet students are more visible on the outside	Students' identity is adapted while inside, and students are more invisible on the outside	Refugees go underground to avoid detection

Table 4.4: Cross-comparative Protective Aims and Strategies Across Groups

To seek protection, two centres used a method of concealment, while one used a combined strategy of visibility and partnership. For the Rvwang and Mon centres, concealment is required in order to protect the identity of their location, which if found could be raided by the authorities or exploited by a criminal element. While some groups use signs, tags, and imagery that can only be identified by those of the in-group (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977), this is not the case with the Rvwang and Mon learning centres as no distinguishing features are present. Urban environments allow refugees and immigrants to hide their illegal position (Grabska, 2006) and in a study of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, 63.1% of the participants reported that the strategy most commonly used was avoidance in order avoid any conflict with people from the host country (Alzoubu, 2017). The Rvwang and Mon centres follow a similar strategy; however, unlike their Syrian counterparts who are granted refugee status in Lebanon, they are deemed illegal in Malaysia, and avoidance must be used in addition to concealment. In contrast to the Rvwang and Mon centres, the Rohingya centre is visible to the outside and can protect its own interests as it is partnered with a Malaysian NGO, which provides an extra layer of protection. In addition to this, the presence of Malaysian citizens acts both as a barrier to protect from external threats that may approach the centre and as a bridge whereby association with Malaysian nationals connects those within the centre to the host

nation. In line with the learning centres, the host nation also employs strategies to ensures its protective aims against realistic threats. To achieve this, refugees are deemed illegal immigrants and are detained and/or deported when arrested. This strategy is aimed at curtailing threats of crime and the threat of job losses, which have an economic and political impact when jobs are taken from Malaysian citizens.

There are some repercussions, unattended or otherwise, of the protective strategies used by the centres and the host nation. For the Rvwang and Mon, who employ concealment, the strategy renders the students who are invisible on the inside visible on the outside. Emersion in their culture, language, and religion leaves Rvwang and Mon children in a vulnerable position on the outside where they can be easily identifiable as non-Malaysians. This could provide those who seek to take advantage of vulnerable people with the tools they need in which to detect and target these groups. The only option for the students in the Rvwang and Mon learning centres is to remain inside the walls of the centre or in close proximity.

Conversely, the Rohingya strategy provides their students with an element of invisibility on the outside as they share the same faith of the host nation and are able to converse somewhat in the host nation's language. This might make it more difficult for the students to be targeted on the outside and grant them slightly more freedom while not in the learning centre. Ultimately, the strategy employed by the host nation to protect their own interests and the representation of the refugee group in the public sphere impacts the strategy of the learning centres the most. The Rvwang and Mon centres' reaction is to go underground so that they avoid detection and subsequent arrest, detention, and deportation. The Rohingya centre perceives less symbolic threat, and their partnership with Malaysian nationals means that they

do not have to go underground as they maintain a cultural contact with the host nation.

Towards a Conceptualisation of the Learning Centre as an Ethnic Safe Space

Combining the analysis from each centre and the protective strategies, the role of the centre as an ethnic safe space begins to emerge. This is more broadly conceptualised from previous understandings. Within the context of the dissertation, in addition to providing a place for the free expression of ethnic identity (Mizra & Raey, 2000; Creese & Martin, 2006; Creese et al., 2006; Wei, 2006; Kwong, 2011), the ethnic safe space encompasses a number of additional areas as illustrated in Figure 4.1. As refugees, the Ethnic Safe Space (ESS) mitigates harm to physical well-being by ensuring the children are protected during the day while parents are away working.

Next, the emotional well-being of the children is addressed through interpersonal relationships created through friendships that form temporary family constructions for children who may go long periods of time without meeting family members. These relationships build familiarity, which is a key aspect of the ESS. In line with Karanja (2010), the children feel safe among those who share the same cultural background. The next element of the ESS is identity protection. The significance of identity is explored in Chapter 5, but in terms of this chapter, parents fear identity loss and the centres represent a place for its preservation within the ESS.

While not a complete conceptualisation, Figure 4.1 demonstrates the idea that protection needs to be approached from different perspectives. Of course,

physical protection will always be a primary concern. For refugees in protracted situations who may live in exile for many years, concepts of protection may have to evolve to consider additional factors. For the participants in the dissertation, symbolic threats were a concern, and the learning centre as an ethnic safe space meant these other areas could be addressed. More research is required to unpack these areas empirically and theoretically, but Figure 4.1 offers a beginning for future studies.

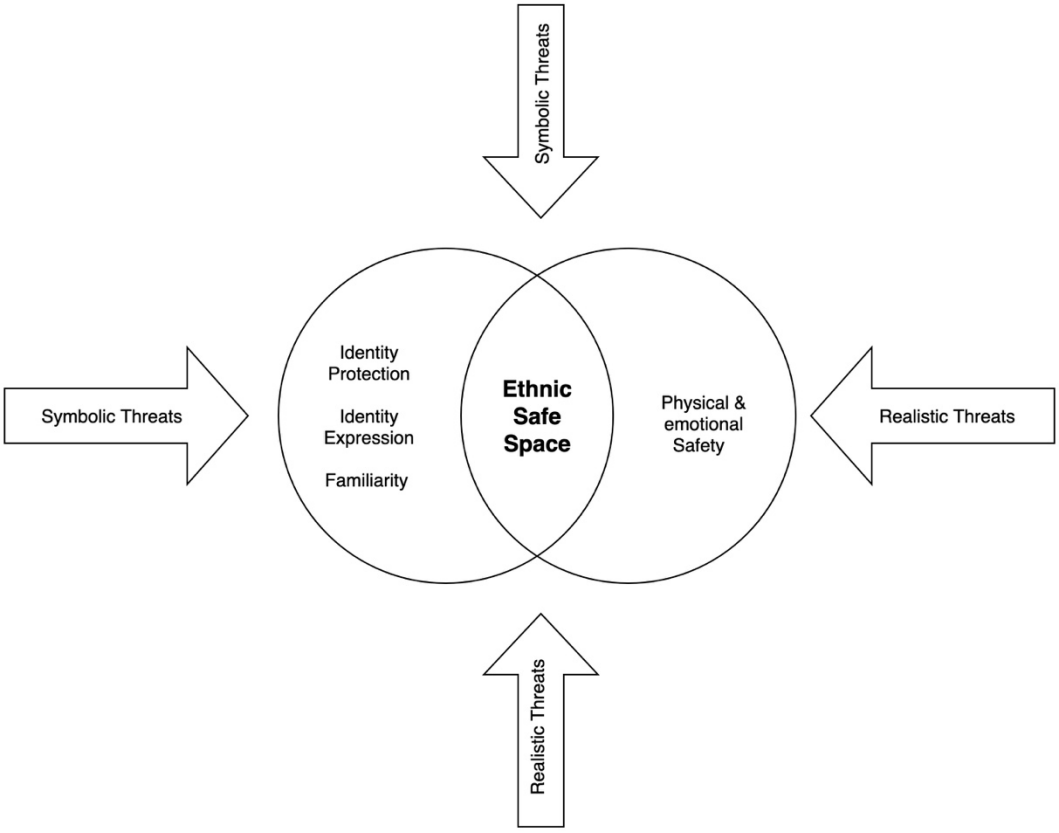

Figure 4.1: The learning Centre as an Ethnic Safe Space

Conclusion

Using the integrated threat theory of prejudice as an analytical lens, this chapter examined and outlined how the participants in the dissertation conceptualise threats to themselves and their children. In terms of realistic threats,

these presented concerns for participants connected with each centre and included being targeted by criminals or arrested and detained by the authorities, which inevitably concerned the participants. Sadly, these threats are not new and have been reported extensively. What is new in relation to the findings from the dissertation is how these threats are approached and managed by each centre. The conceptualisation of threats is not limited to physical or psychological. Of course, the centres form a physical barrier to the dangers outside, but in addition to this they provide an ethnic safe space.

Prior to the dissertation, protective strategies were viewed from the perspective of the individual (Alzoubi et al., 2017; El-Shaarawi, 2015; Grabska, 2006; Sommers, 2001), so the findings from the dissertation provide new insight into how these strategies are applied to the context of a learning centre. Interestingly, there is divergence between the strategies employed by each centre. The Rvwang and Mon centres conceal their locations so that the whereabouts are only known to those in the community. The Rohingya centre provides a contrasting case to study as its relationship with a Malaysian charity and presence of Malaysian nationals as teachers mean the centre gains a sense of legitimacy. This offers an additional layer of protection that is unavailable for the Rvwang and Mon centres. Whether these centres would be open to this strategy remains to be seen, and the findings in the forthcoming chapters may provide an explanation as to why it might not given their attachment to their ethnic heritage and desire to protect it (see Chapter 5).

The strategies that are in place function to protect those inside. Realistic and symbolic threats are further compounded by how refugees are perceived in society and how the government categorises their position. In Malaysia, refugees are deemed illegal immigrants and face persecution and the threat of detention and/or

repatriation back to a country where more dangers exist. This, along with negative stereotyping, has forced two centres to go underground and separate from society. There are signs that the government and general perception of refugees in Malaysia may be softening with the election of a new government in 2018 that promises to legitimise refugee status, provide access to work, and allow refugees to create a home without subjection to oppression (Pakatan Harapan, 2018). This is a relatively new approach compared to how refugees were perceived by the previous government, so only time will tell if these assurances see the light of day. Should the promises materialise the learning centres will have to be researched again to examine how this new standing is conceptualised and if the perceived threats have lessened or increased.

The learning centres play a central role in the protection of students. The strategies they employ not only protect students from harm, but they protect the cultural interests of the representatives that they serve. These strategies are vital for survival against daily perceived threats. Yet, in line with a study by Grabska (2006), the result of these strategies is that communities who are already disconnected from the host society around them could become further entrenched in their communities and become more separated from the host society in which they live. This exacerbates a situation where there is less intercultural contact between groups, which leads to less being known about the other (see Chapter 6 for a more detailed analysis and discussion). The disconnection is linked to a strong attachment to the in-group: "People who strongly identify with their in-groups are likely to experience greater feelings of threat from out-groups than people whose identity is less closely tied to in-group membership" (Stephan & Stephan, 2013, p. 3). This may explain why representatives from the Rvwang and Mon centres perceive

greater threats than those from the Rohingya centre. This requires a nuanced discussion that takes place in Chapters 5 and 6 as they explore these areas in relation to the learning centres.

Finally, although it would appear that government schools and the learning centres are diametrically opposite, at their core, they are underpinned with a duty to protect children and mitigate external and internal threats. Notwithstanding this, both diverge in a critical area that is associated with symbolic threats. The state educational system in the U.K. is making strides to create safe spaces for minorities or individuals from underrepresented groups. The concept of the ethnic safe space presented in this chapter differs somewhat as it is specifically targeted for the participants in the dissertation who seek familiarity, identity expression, and identity protection. This is impractical in large state schooling systems that have to accommodate a divergent student body that consists of a number of ethnic, language, religious, and cultural backgrounds. This also differentiates the learning centres from other educational institutions as there is a specific role that they have for the communities they serve. Rather than meeting the needs of the nation, in the case of the learning centres, protection is contextual, personalised, and constructed specifically to suit each community.

Chapter 5 – Identity Maintenance

Introduction

Boundaries are used by all nations to encapsulate their members within a single community, and "[s]chools are one of the most important institutional locations for transmitting information about the boundaries of national membership" (Bleich, 1999, p. 64). How these social boundaries are defined within the school have to be identified by examining the curricular and learning materials, as there is often little policy documentation available on the subject (Bleich, 1999). Exploring the role of school in the perpetuation of social boundaries, Bleich (1999) conducted an analysis of British and French education policy. The crux of the study was the disparate ways that nations, through educational institutions, bring ethnic minority individuals into the national consciousness. In the 1960s the British enacted a policy of multiculturalism towards education, which sought to acknowledge all ethnic groups. This strategy saw the recognition of other religions for the first time, and compromises were found for the specific dietary and dress requirements of Muslim groups within schools.

Conversely, the French utilised educational institutions to quash cultural differences for the purpose of bringing all into a unified cultural boundary based on a single understanding of Frenchness. Both strategies are not without their flaws, but the paper concluded with the argument that both nations were trying to address equality and belonging within the context of how the nation addresses the cultural diversity of its population. The takeaway from this is that state education serves a functional and developmental role in accommodating new members into the nation's social boundaries.

The importance of school in the context of the nation is profound, which is why education and the contents of the curriculum are highly contested. This was made apparent in the U.K. in 2019 with the introduction of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and LGBT equality classes, which faced an outcry from conservative Muslims ("LGBT School Lessons," 2019). In this sense, school connects to the wider aspirations of the nation, but there are limitations to the extent to which schools can address the specific interests of each cultural group. Ultimately, state schools serve the interests of the nation, and even with a multicultural approach the U.K. still struggles to bring all groups within a single social boundary. Groups who feel underrepresented in the general schooling system turn to alternative means to ensure that components connected to a specific group's identity (faith, language, culture) are retained and passed on to the next generation. This is where cultural worlds collide as national and community social boundaries compete for the hearts and minds of new members. It is here that this chapter offers a comparative look at the role that learning centres play in the construction and maintenance of social boundaries. In much the same way state schools serve the nation's interests, on a micro level the learning centres serve the interests of the community.

One aspect that has driven the dissertation is the idea that the learning centres are an extension of the communities they serve, and within the Malaysian context, groups have settled into enclaves that mimic their ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences (Hoffsteader, 2014; Munir-Asen, 2018). The learning centres appear to follow suit by adopting the language, faith, and culture of the community, so the aim of this chapter is to explore these components in relation to their salience in each centre. These areas emerged as significant themes throughout a review of

the literature as well as the two-layer deductive, inductive analysis of the data collected from the three learning centres. The literature shows that language and faith are highly salient for immigrant and refugee communities. Faith has been shown to reaffirm and/or maintain an ethnic and religious identity (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007; Chong, 1998; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Min, 1992), and the research on language also makes the same connections to identity (Francis et al., 2010; Keevallik, 2010; Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Phinney et al., 2001a; Sachdev, 1995; Smolicz, 1981, 1992; Smolicz et al., 2001; UNHCR, 2004). Zhou (2001) stated that it can be challenging to maintain and promote ethnic culture and identity.

For instance, the limited opportunities for ethnic language practice in a new land (Portes & Schauffler, 1996) can often result in the ethnic language being subsumed by the dominant host nation language unless there are others around who share and speak the same language (Yok-Fong & Pellebon, 2012). Moreover, schools can influence identity transmission either through the teachers, textbooks, or other students (Carter, 2006; Carter & Goodwin, 1994; DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Gay, 1978; Locke, 1996). The inference in the case of the dissertation is that the individualised approach taken suggests that identity plays an important role in how the learning centres function.

Within this thesis, this chapter is the most intensive as it unpacks complex areas that emcompass language, faith, culture, and preparation for the future. This presents a challenge as these areas are highly contextualised and personalised for each community that the centres serve. Using imagined communities as an analytical framework provides this chapter with the tool by which to analyse these areas so the way in which each centre envisions an imagined community can be identified. What is more, due to the complexities and fragility of these communities,

they are highly susceptible to internal and external structures, so a discussion on the impact of this explores how they contribute to the construction of the imagined community. The next section outlines the analytical lens in more detail and explains how it is conceptualised for this chapter.

Analytical Lens: Imagined Communities

In order to conceptualise identity as a multi-dimensional process and explore how this is facilitated by the learning centre, Anderson's (1983) concept of Imagined Communities (ICs) is used as an analytical lens. The concept is developed from Anderson's research on exploring nationalism and the nation to which he posits: "… a nation is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). While investigating what connects people to the imagined community, Anderson found that print media was especially powerful at conveying messages to which individuals who had never met could attach a sense of belonging.

The concept has since been adapted by Norton (2001) who adapted ICs for an educational setting, and then Kanno (2003) who investigated the structural influence of educational institutions and concluded that "[s]chools' visions of imagined communities, whether they be implicit or explicit, exert a powerful influence on their current policies and practices, ultimately affecting the students' identities" (Kanno, 2003, p. 298). Previous studies that have investigated imagined communities of education in the context of state schools in Canada, Japan, and the United States found that identity plays a salient role for parents and students (He, Bettez, & Levin, 2017; Kanno & Norton, 2003). Studies have found that there are

parents who want to shape the imagined community their children enter (He, Bettez, & Levin, 2017) and parents who want to prepare their children to enter an imagined community (Kanno & Norton, 2003). The schools are central to the process by which students enter an imagined community, and by selecting a school, parents are choosing which imagined community they wish their children to participate.

The potential for schools to influence an imagined community is not done so in a vacuum. There are structures that can influence the kind of imagined community that each school envisions. The bilingual schools in Kanno's (2003) study had to forge an imagined community that allowed each to maintain their own identity yet would allow the students to enter into the Japanese imagined community. This compromise is an area to explore in relation to the learning centres. Unlike Kanno's study, the learning centre representatives come from a country where their identity is under threat from a hegemony with an agenda to assimilate all ethnic groups into a single identity (Lall & South, 2014; South, 2003), and a host nation that is hostile to their presence. The effect that this has over the manner in which the imagined community is shaped is explored and examined in the context of each centre.

The data analysis section explores each centre individually under four themes. The first, faith, unpacks the significance of it and how it is integrated into the school day. The next section explores what the primary language is and seeks to provide a rationale as to why it is so. The third section, preparation, examines what the centres are preparing the children for, either life in Malaysia or beyond, and how this is achieved. Finally, using the aforementioned themes, the last section will piece together how the imagined community is envisioned and facilitated by the learning centre.

The Rvwang Centre Analysis

Introduction

Language, literacy, and faith are at the heart of the Rvwang learning centre. When combined, these form an idea of what identity means to the learning centre, or what aspects of identity need to be promoted and passed on. This is perhaps more salient for the Rvwang learning centre as 26 children (as of 2016) out of the 34 enroled are under 6 years of age. This means that for many, they may well have been born in Malaysia or remember very little of where their parents came from. This factor plus the group being relatively small means maintaining an ethnic awareness is all the more important. In their homeland, erosion of identity is a concern and has been for some time. As one participant stated, "*For over 40 years people in the Kachin community have been practicing Jingpowisation.*" Jingpow refers to the dominant group in their home state, and this, combined with government policy for a single Burmese identity (Lall & South, 2014), leaves some representatives from the Rvwang to fear their distinctive identity is changing. This concern is not limited to the boundaries of the homeland, as it has travelled transnationally to Malaysia where there remains a need to reinforce what it means to be Rvwang.

As well as leaders from the church and community, it was parents who voiced their concerns on the need for a learning centre that specifically addressed attributes which they saw as being unique to being part of a collective Rvwang identity. Yet, on many occasions, this was expressed as a desire for an individual's child to emulate them: "*I want my kids to be like me*." This desire speaks to the need for parents to see themselves in their child in that they want their child to share the same language, faith, and culture. If the child were to speak the language of the host

nation or even the national language of Myanmar, some cultural distance might be produced. Participants were equally concerned about losing their children, not in the physical sense, but in the connection they have to themselves. Some comments from participants were, "*I don't want the kids to lose who they are,*" "*I don't want the kids to forget who they are*" and "*They don't know who they are.*" In their homeland, the Rvwang identity has to stand up to the national identity and the dominant group in the state, the Kachin. Similarly, in Malaysia, there are no borders or communities to encircle a collective identity and protect it from the influence of other communities. It is here that some representatives may feel that there is an increasing need for their children to be part of their imagined community, yet to do so they have to learn what it means to be Rvwang. Some other comments from participants were, "*They don't know who their people are*" and "*I want my kids to know the Rvwang community.*" This connects back to the age of many of the children in the centre and the limited exposure they have had within a Rvwang imagined community, as well as limited contact they have had with other individuals who share the same share identity as them.

It is important to note that the Rvwang centre was opened around two years before the dissertation began, and previously the children would have been enroled in a nearby centre which catered to the Kachin group and promoted their language (Jingpow) and faith. Seeing their children learn the language of another group and slowly become immersed in their community could have stirred feelings of allegiance and protectionism of a Rvwang identity. This, in addition to a feeling that a disconnectedness may befall the children, propelled the centre and its representatives to reinforce and construct a sense of belonging to a Rvwang identity. The goal of this effort was so that the children would not be alone and, more

importantly, not lost to another group's identity. To counter this, one of the teachers at the centre proclaimed, "*Before the kids leave the centre, they should understand their tribe and history."* In gaining this knowledge of Rvwang which includes the faith, language, and culture, it will anchor the child to the community identity, which in turn ensures the development and growth of the Rvwang identity. The next section explores how faith is used to envision an imagined community and examines the rationale behind its inclusion in the learning centre.

Religious Focus

The faith of the Rvwang has taken a transnational journey to be established in Malaysia. It is this faith that plays an integral role in the daily schedule and is integrated into the school day. On the continuance of faith in the centre one participated noted, "*The church is very important. It's a main source for all of us,*" and continued by stating, "*They (young members) don't know where our church is, where our community is, who our relatives are, or who the Rvwang people are."* There is a desire to preserve the religious identity of the Rvwang, as one participant noted, "*Some parents are Christians, while others are not. The parents and elders said we must teach our faith from childhood. We must share the culture of who we are and our story.*" Faith is not viewed as a separate construct—it is intertwined with notions of community identity and culture. With this connection between faith and identity, an immediate need for representatives from the community was to unify its members under a single church. One participant stated, "*There are a lot of churches here, and our users were scattered around in many places, so it was hard to connect and unite with them*." The area in which the Rvwang centre is located is a melting pot of different cultures and faiths, many of which are Christian, not

unlike the Rvwang, but of different denominations of the faith. The concern was that while there are churches that preach the same faith, they do not preach the same cultural values that are held by the Rvwang, and for this, a Rvwang church was required. The learning centre thus becomes an extension of the Rvwang church and a vessel through which a religious identity can be transmitted to the children. Being placed in other learning centres from different groups, Rvwang children would be exposed daily to the religious identities of other groups, and the Rvwang church's influence would be lessened.

The centre is non-secular, which allows for a religious message to be integrated into the school day. Students are exposed to religious symbolism, which can be seen on the walls in the form of prayers and biblical verses, and there are books that feature religious stories told for children. Prayer is part of the school day with the Lord's Prayer recited in class, and before lunch a short prayer is administered by the headteacher upon which all the children clasp their hands and bow their heads to give their thanks for the meal they are about to receive. The teachers at the centre who are ethnically Rvwang are also prominent members of the Rvwang church. This provides a physical connection between the church and centre and ensures that a religious message is transmitted between both.

The Rvwang church is located one floor above the Rvwang learning centre in the same building. During church services the children go to the learning centre for faith-based classes while their family members attend the service. The close proximity between the church and learning centre means ethnic and religious boundaries are secured, and there is less chance of interference from another faith as it is contained within the same location. When participants make comments such as, "*I want my kids to be like me*," "*I want my kids to know the Rvwang community*"

or "*I don't want the kids to lose who they are*," this also refers to their faith and the connection faith has to shared Rvwang identity. Faith is intrinsically connected to a sense of culture and community that further identifies a person as part of the Rvwang social group. The learning centre facilitates this integration into the group conscious by promoting the faith of the Rvwang in conjunction with cultural values that are representative of who the Rvwang are and what is valued.

A crossover is identified between research on churches for immigrant groups and the Rvwang learning centre in the role that faith and the institution play and its influence over the community that is served. Choi and Berhó (2016) found that for the immigrant group they studied, the church responded to the needs of the community and provided them with services, identity, status, and a way to develop their faith. The Rvwang learning centre functions in much the same way by providing the students with an identity that is closely connected to their parents' religious beliefs. In line with studies on churches (Chong, 1998; Min, 1992; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Cadge & Ecklund, 2007; Kim, 2011), the Rvwang centre also functions as a place that can reaffirm and/or maintain ethnic and religious identity. Congruence can also be found on a larger scale with research on Catholic school education in the U.K., with one study concluding that "[t]he importance of membership of and adherence to the teaching of the Roman Catholic church is central to the identity of the Catholic school and education in the faith is indispensable" (Johnson & Castelli, 2000, p. 76). Faith represents one aspect of identity construction, which is complex and in a state of flux. The representatives involved with the learning centre value the inclusion of faith as it forms part of who they are and is an attribute that needs to be passed on to the next generation. The learning centre connects faith to the children by incorporating it into the school day.

This ensures a religious message is not lost, interfered with, or influenced by another group, and establishes it as an integral part of what it means to be Rvwang. The next section looks at language and explores in much the same way as faith how it is incorporated into the learning centre, and its significance for Rvwang identity and for the imagined community.

Language & Literary Focus

The integration of faith into the learning centre demonstrates one aspect of what it means to be part of the Rvwang collective and how the centre facilitates entrance into this social group. Another area that is of equal importance is linguistic in nature. The language primarily used in the centre is Rvwang. It is linguistically very different from Burmese, which is the official language of instruction and education in Myanmar. Due to Rvwang's status in their homeland, though, as one participant noted, "*We have to study our language from the community people because we cannot learn from the government schools*." The effect of this is that the ethnic language of the Rvwang faces erosion. As another participant stated, "*Sometimes people use Rvwang, but some people don't know how to write or how to speak, so that's why we use Rvwang language to teach*." This is further compounded by intermarriage with other groups, which also threatens to diminish the number of Rvwang speakers. One participant stated, "*Now there are some parents that make it very hard to maintain the language because some are married with a different people and their children do not learn the language properly*." The influence of other languages and the common usage of Burmese for spoken and written communication concerns one Rvwang representative, who stated, "*Now, all most all kids are speaking Burmese, and few are using their mother tongue*."

Representatives from the Rvwang centre see their ethnic language as a connection to a Rvwang identity. Furthermore, there is a growing focus on literacy in the language as a way to continue its survival and promotion. Along with Christianity, missionaries who went to the Rvwang region of Myanmar brought a writing system based on the Roman alphabet (Kipgen, 2015), which sets it apart from the Burmese script that is taught in schools. The opportunity for many to be literate in the Rvwang language is limited, as one participant shared, "*Some people don't know how to write or read, because they do not study well in our native land."* The Rvwang language is used by individuals in Malaysia, but as one participant pointed out when it is used, there are often mistakes, which means there needs to be a greater emphasis placed on teaching students how to read and write. On this, another participant noted, "*The kids need to learn our culture and our literature as well."*

Teachers within the centre have taken it upon themselves to create textbooks that teach the Rvwang script, and there is transnational cooperation with Rvwang groups in other countries such as Thailand, where they share resources created using the Rvwang script. It is in these books that children in the centre can discover a textual identity that was previously limited to a verbal identity. This reinforces the language and promotes it to young people who will continue using it for social media where written communication is so ubiquitous, and where there is a need to increase literacy. As one participant stated, "*People use phones to send messages but they don't know how to in the Rvwang language*." For the language to be maintained, the centre acknowledges that alongside spoken communication, literacy is also vital as it increases an individual's involvement in the ethnic group.

It also provides another boundary to ensure that the language is not subsumed by more dominant language such as Burmese, which could erode the Rvwang identity.

Across the literature it is evident that the position of an ethnic language in non-formal educational settings, such as the Rvwang centre, is one of prominence over the language of the host nation (Brown, 2003; Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Francis et al., 2010; Karanja, 2010; Keevallik, 2010; Nagel & Staehle, 2005; Phinney et al., 2001a; Williams, 2012; Oh, 2012). There are three possible reasons why the Rvwang centre places the language above all others in the centre. Firstly, in line with Nagel and Staeheli (2005) and Francis, Archer, and Mau (2010), using the ethnic language means there is a transnational connection which in this case is created between the homeland and the centre. This could be important for the participants as many of the children will have spent much of their lives outside of their homeland, so continuing the language maintains a connection to where their parents are from. Secondly, in creating this transnational connection, the centre is also creating a place where the language can be preserved.

Living in a foreign country means some groups often face challenges of preserving their languages (Zhou, 2001). At times there are few places for the ethnic language to be used (Portes & Schauffler, 1996), which can result in the child adopting the language of the host nation unless there are others around who share the same language (Yok-Fong & Pellebon, 2012). The centre creates a place where speakers of the same language can interact, share, and learn the language in an immersive environment. This ensures language usage and, more importantly, safeguards that outside languages are less influential.

Lastly, the representatives in the study were often concerned about children feeling disconnected and feared they would not know who they are and who they

are connected to. This aspect is perhaps where language has the greatest influence. Phinney et al. (2001a) found that language impacted identity in adolescents. Language, therefore, acts as an identity marker that connects an individual to a specific group (Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Francis et al., 2010). Within the centre, children are perceived to be without an identity and connection to the community, so one is forged by using language to differentiate themselves between those in their immediate group and those who are outside this group. This is why language is central for the Rvwang centre, and provides a rationale as to why language in this centre and possibly many others around the world insist on preserving it (Brown, 2003; Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Francis et al., 2010; Karanja, 2010; Keevalick, 2010; 2001a; Nagel & Staehle, 2005; Oh, 2012; Williams, 2012). One rationale could also be the connection that language has to a shared identity and community attachment.

The analysis of the Rvwang centre has thus far provided findings to suggest that faith and language are integral to how the imagined community is envisioned. The next section provides an additional layer to the imagined community—one which favours an attachment to the homeland and country of resettlement over the host nation. To investigate this, the subjects taught demonstrate what the centre is preparing their students for, and the subjects that are not included highlight how the centre envisions their present and future.

In Preparation for…

The subjects taught at the centre largely depend on the teachers they have. For this centre, aside from a number of volunteers who teach at the centre intermittently, the core team of teachers are ethnically Rvwang. The teaching schedule is dominated by four classes, which are science, math, English, with the

last class of each day reserved for the Rvwang language. All classes are conducted using the Rvwang language with English explained using Rvwang. The textbooks, however, are often written in English as they have been donated to the centre by local NGOs and well-wishers. Along with English textbooks, there are textbooks in Malay which are not used. Instead, the centre incorporates the English language textbooks into math and science classes. There are not any textbooks written in the Rvwang language, aside from books that facilitate Rvwang language and literacy learning, so the centre's choice in specifically adopting the English textbooks is one of necessity, yet it also demonstrates a thought process. As one participant noted, "*We are not teaching Malay, but as much as we can we are teaching math, science, English*." The exclusion of Malay may seem strange as the children live in Malaysia and may reside in the country for many years.

Yet, the use of English textbooks over Malay textbooks emphasises the future the centre wants for their children. One participant stated, "*In the future the children might migrate to a third country. If they go to primary level, then that might be a big gap*". The gap the participant refers to is knowledge-based, as there is an admission that the children who do migrate will be disadvantaged compared to students who have proceeded normally through an uninterrupted educational system. What the centre aims to achieve is to reduce that knowledge gap somewhat by passing on skills that will help children once they are enroled into a new school, and some proficiency in the English language is an aspect. As another participant stated, "*Now many family members and their kids migrate, and they can attend local school and speak directly to their teachers and friends, in English even if it's not very good. However, after 2-3 months maybe they can speak very well.*"

The additional role of the centre that is presented here is one of preparing children for their post-resettlement enrolment into education—one that it is assumed will be in an English-speaking country. The centre envisions its students entering social groups where English will be required and a knowledge of which will provide students with a foundation or at least familiarity. Learning how to speak and write Malay is therefore not in contention for a subject in the centre as the primary focus is Rvwang, and secondary to that is English. One participant explained why English is needed in the centre: "*We know our language cannot be used to communicate with other people. So, with English we can communicate with everyone wherever we go.*"

In addition to this, English is still seen as a functional skill in Malaysia. One participant stated, "*In the working place people use English more than Malay, so we speak it."* Nevertheless, there are occasions where Malay is used in the workplace, as another participant shared, "… *in some place where people work Malay is more common so then people only speak Malay.*" This poses an interesting dilemma as many of the centre's participants, parents, and children included will spend multiple years in Malaysia, which means a job opportunity may arise where knowledge of Malay is needed. Moreover, negotiating the streets and interacting with government agencies and, more importantly, with the authorities means a working knowledge of Malay could be beneficial. The lack thereof is two-fold. Firstly, the classes that the centre can offer depend on someone who can teach them. With a person who is proficient in Malay and is able to commit to classes, the researcher was informed that the centre would consider offering classes. The contentious point that leads into the second reason is that extra classes dedicated to

the learning of Malay would reduce the number of classes that are dedicated to other subjects, which the centre may view as more valuable, such as Rvwang and English.

In preparing the students, the centre essentially has two main foci. The first is to ensure that the children are literate in the Rvwang language. The ethnic Rvwang teachers who teach subjects in their native language create an immersive environment for the language to thrive and be elevated to the primary form of daily communication. Classes in Rvwang literacy then provide a textural identity to the students that is based in the Rvwang language, giving them the tools in which to communicate with friends via mobile and social technologies using the Rvwang written form. The last point is key, as participants noted that many Rvwang individuals can speak Rvwang, but use Burmese as the primary method for written communication as it is the only way they know how to write.

The consequence is that Burmese becomes the default language of communication that has the potential to replace the Rvwang language. The second focus of the centre is to prepare the students for resettlement. This process can take years, with many of the participants in this dissertation reporting that they had lived in Malaysia for over 4 years and some 7 years or more. The eventual goal is to be resettled, so before that time comes, the centre has to provide an education that, while not on the same level as that of the country they may resettle in, at least resembles somewhat the educational environment the children will enter. In doing so, the hope is that the knowledge gap can be reduced, and the children can acculturate faster to the new schools that they enrol in. Classes in math and science form part of this strategy, but using English textbooks and learning the language may help to ease the transition. One consequence of the foci is that an emphasis on

ethnic identity and resettlement separates the centre and the children who attend from the society in which they will spend many years.

The main takeaway from this section is that the primary focus of the centre is on ethnic identity construction and preparation for future resettlement. The latter is achieved by creating a school-like environment and teaching English as a second language. Research has shown that entering into a new school in a foreign country requires information on subjects and language support to ease integration (Hek, 2005; Rutter, 2006; Mathews, 2008; Ager & Strang, 2008; Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010; Taylor & Kaur-Sidhu, 2012). The Rvwang centre facilitates this process with an approach that focuses on the commitment to their ethnic group and life after Malaysia.

The Imagined Community

Using the analysis of faith, language, and literacy and what the centre is preparing their students for, it is possible to construct the imagined community that is being envisioned by the centre (Table 5.1). For the children, the centre is the nucleus of the Rvwang social world, where all aspects of the imagined community intersect. It is here that education, faith, identity, language, literacy, community, and preparation for the future come together in order to socialise the children into a Rvwang imagined community. Due to this outlook, Malaysia is not an imagined community that the centre envisions its students to enter—even if the students reside there and may find themselves working in the country for a number of years.

The centre facilitates an imagined community that looks very much inward for identity affirmation and construction. Two significant markers are the language and subject choice of the centre as they reinforce the imagined community. There

is no support for Burmese language instruction. What this infers is that the centre does not anticipate or is yet unready to consider that the students will be repatriated and thus enter into the complex Myanmar imagined community. Returning home means going to state schools where the primary language is Burmese. If this happens, the returning students would be at a severe disadvantage as they might not be proficient in the language from a verbal and literacy standpoint. Here the Rvwang imagined community distances itself from a Burmese national identity in favour of closeness with its ethnic identity. The same is evident in Malaysia, where the centre does not provide instruction in the host nation's language, thus further distancing itself from the host society. The subject choices further substantiate this distancing effect as it is dominated by math, science, and language classes in Rvwang and English. Classes in the Rvwang language demonstrate an allegiance to the imagined community, and classes in English indicate a preparedness for entrance into a transnational imagined community that will occur when the students are resettled. Table 5.1 outlines the aspects that inform a vision for a Rvwang imagined community as facilitated by the learning centre.

Religious Focus	Non-secular based on the Christian faith.
Language Focus	Literate in and spoken proficiency in the Rvwang language
Other Language focus	English as a Second Language
Language Environment	Immersion in the Rvwang Language with ethnic Teachers
Curricular focus	Math, Science, English language and Rvwang Language Classes
Identity Focus	Construction and Maintenance

Social Perspective of the Centre	Inward Looking / Rejection of outside social forces and influence
Preparation for	Resettlement to another country

Table 5.1: The Rvwang Learning Centre's Envisioned Imagined Community

The imagined community envisioned by the centre finds some parallels with a study conducted on bilingual schools in Japan (Kanno, 2003). In the study, Kanno found that in the four schools, language priority was given to the one which would benefit the students in the future. Where some schools had students whose families were from China, Cambodia, and Vietnam, the Japanese language was still prioritised as the students were not expected to return to their country. Conversely, in another school where the student body was ethnically Chinese, the focus was firmly placed on the construction of Chinese identity, with the aim to counteract the dominance of Japanese society. The Rvwang centre's imagined community mirrors this last school as they also seek to preserve a sense of identity and culture. The main difference, however, is that the Rvwang centre is not fixed due to their legal standing in the country, and this makes them more susceptible to external structures that would otherwise have less of an impact on the schools in Kanno's (2003) study.

From a micro perspective, the inward-looking nature of the centre advocates for an imagined community based on an ethnic identity centred around its construction and maintenance. A meso-layer viewpoint that takes into consideration larger social and legal structures that bear down on the centre show that the centre may be a reflection of how refugees are viewed in a stratified Malaysian society. From a macro perspective the centre is influenced by international legal structures,

such as the reduction of support for refugees in Malaysia due to funding redistribution to other convict areas in Syria and Africa.

As a group that is marginalised and labelled as other, the expectation is that groups like these will live on the peripheries of society. The centre, therefore, recreates the position that they occupy in Malaysian society and are left to forge an imagined community that is independent of the one in which they currently inhabit. No support is given to the centre, and the students are very unlikely to be accepted into the Malaysian consciousness. Students are thus not expected to make a contribution to Malaysian society, so the focus falls firmly on a connection to ethnic identity and aspirations for future resettlement.

The non-secular nature of the centre, the immersive environment in which the Rvwang language is used, and the promotion of literacy in the ethnic language further connect students to a shared identity—one that promotes closeness to an ethnic group and disconnectedness from the host nation. The result is that with the development of the Rvwang imagined community, students gain a distinctive sense of who they are, yet one that creates distance between themselves and other groups. What is evident in the discussion of the Rvwang centre is that their imagined community is envisioned through the use of faith, language, and literacy, ethnic identity, and aspirations for future resettlement. Moreover, the learning centre plays a pivotal role in aligning these intersecting attributes to ensure the imagined community is realised.

The Mon Centre Analysis

Introduction

Unlike many other groups in Myanmar, the Mon can trace an oral and literary history back more than 2,000 years, and they are largely responsible for introducing Theravada Buddhism into the region (Ibrahim, 2018). It is with this sense of a unified history and culture that the Mon in their homeland have pushed back against government attempts to enforce a single national Burmese identity (South, 2003). The result of this pushback is that Mon groups, such as the one in Malaysia, have been established to highlight the plight of the Mon and to promote their ethnic identity to those living overseas. The political origins of the Mon organisation in Malaysia have since been altered to one that focus on social outreach of Mon individuals working in Malaysia and their children. As one participant stated, "*We still help back in Myanmar, but not as much as we used to do. Now, we want to educate people, and arrange for people to do talks so they know what it is to be Mon.*" Attaining a sense of what it is to be Mon was shared by a number of participants, as one stated, "*It's important so that children know their nation, kingdom and history.*" This is also followed by a warning that, according to one participant, "…*if the children follow another, they will not understand our culture."* This warning alludes to the numerous competing cultures that can be found in close proximity to the Mon centre and the potential influence of Malaysian society. Among the participants there was a desire for the children to emulate who they are just as they have done with their parents: "*I am Mon, and my parents are Mon."* This is a powerful declarative statement that speaks to the participant's ethnic identity and the lineage that it has within the family.

In analysing the data for the Mon centre it became apparent that language, faith, culture, and history were all vital components in how the imagined community is interpreted and understood by the learning centre. The Mon centre

operates with 35 children aged between 5-15, 32 of whom board at the centre seven-days a week. One participant stated, "*My parents are far away, so in 2 or 3 months I see them once. If they are working nearer, then I can see them once a week.*" The parents and family members of the children work far away in rubber plantations in the north and in the fishing industry in the west. In their absence the centre becomes the de facto guardian of the children with a mandate to provide protection, education, and access to the Mon imagined community via the teaching of language, faith, culture, and history.

On the connection that language has, one participant noted, "*You will see other Mon people and you cannot read and write your language, so you will be lost*." Participants were often quoted as saying that they did not want the children to be lost or not know who they are. It is this fear that the children will be disconnected that drives the teaching of the language as it is seen as connected to a sense of Mon-ness and provides access to a shared community. Faith and culture are also attached with a sense of what it means to be Mon, as one participant shared, "*To learn about Mon a person needs to understand Buddhism and the culture."* Entering into the Mon consciousness means understanding the language, faith, and culture. Armed with these aspects connects a child to the Mon community and ensures that a Mon identity is continued. The next section explores how faith is used to envision an imagined community and examines the rationale behind its inclusion in the learning centre.

Religious Focus

Given the long history and connection between the Mon and Buddhism, representatives from the Mon community have ensured that a place for worship was

created in Malaysia. One participant stated, "*The main temple was built in 2007-8. It was started, because we could not go to the temple as we are foreigners and were not allowed to enter."* This temple creates transnational connections between Mon monasteries in Myanmar and Thailand, and provides a place for monks who visit Malaysia to stay as they travel around the country to visit Mon individuals who are working. The location of the temple is vital as it can be found two floors above the Mon learning centre. The close proximity of the temple means it can ensure that the students in the centre receive a religious message that is rooted in the Buddhist faith of the Mon. While there are many other Buddhist temples in Malaysia, access to them is restricted, and, more importantly, the message they provide might not be in keeping with Mon religious values and aims.

Being non-secular, the centre follows in the Buddhist faith of the Mon where it is integrated in the school day. One participant shared, "*Every day at 8am the children do some yoga and 5 min medication. Then at night from 9pm to 9:30 they have 30 mins in the temple—20 mins for medication and 20 mins for prayer."* Access to faith is for one participant important, because, as they stated, "*We have to train the children and give them meditation to be polite."* Polite could have numerous meanings, but in this sense, it is refers to the values and manners that Mon hold and therefore require their children to possess. To impart this religious message means starting at a young age, one participant noted, "*It is important when they are young that we teach them the right way, so they know what is good and what is bad. Then, when they are adults they can go freely.*" This is more pronounced for the Mon centre as it is essentially responsible for instilling these values in the children, as parents and family who may usually do this are absent. In the case of one parent, the Mon centre was chosen due to the specific faith that it

follows: "*Mon are Buddhist*," and "(School name omitted) *is Christian, so the Mon school is more suitable for me*." There are numerous learning centres located near the Mon centre; however, the centre serves representatives from different ethnic groups from Myanmar who follow different faiths. In choosing the Mon centre, parents are stating their desire for their child to follow the same faith as it connects to a sense of what it means to be Mon, in essence, as one participant noted, "*[t]o learn about Mon a person needs to understand Buddhism and the culture."* Identity and faith in this context are not mutually exclusive—they are interwoven and shape what it means to be part of a Mon collective conscious and shared identity. The learning centre is a container whereby those inside are immersed in the particular branch of Buddhism that is directly associated with the Mon. The centre allocates time for prayer and worship within the school day. There is also religious symbolism on the walls in the form of images of well-known monks and Buddhist prayers, which serve as a reminder to the children of the faith they are expected to follow. With the close connection to the temple above the centre, male children can, with their parents' permission, choose to become a novice monk. Out of the 34 children in the centre, one child had chosen to do this. He is easily noticeable as while his classmates wear t-shirts and a Myanmar style sarong, he is clothed in Buddhist robes. This is further evidence of the close connection between faith and the centre, and the connection between faith and the importance it has in the construction the imagined community. Further analysis of the importance of clothing takes place in Chapter 6.

There are similarities that can be identified between studies on the influence of churches and the influence of centre in the dissertation. The centre responds to the needs of the community it serves by providing education, identity, and a way to

develop the community's faith. The Mon centre positions itself is a parent of sorts as it provides the children with the same religious identity that is shared by their parents. The centre is a place that can reaffirm and/or maintain an ethnic and religious identity—a finding which is in line with studies conducted on the role of immigrant churches (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007; Chong, 1998; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Kim, 2011; Min, 1992) and Catholic schools in the U.K. (Johnson & Castelli, 2000). The Mon centre is the vessel through which a religious message that is specifically aimed at Mon Buddhism can be carried. For this message to be received, participants noted that it should be heard from a young age. The centre facilitates this message and ensures that the children enter into an imagined community that contains Buddhism, but possibly more importantly, the children enter into the same imagined community to which their parents are members. The centre encapsulates a religious message and shields the children from the influence of outside forces that might pull them to another faith, and away from an attribute which is so closely connected to Mon identity. The next section looks at language and explores in much the same way as faith, how it is incorporated into the learning centre and its significance for Mon identity, and for the imagined community.

Language & Literacy Focus

In their homeland the Mon have limited access to formal education that is conducted in their ethnic language. According to two participants, there were different reasons: "*In my hometown there weren't any schools"* or *"When I was young the government closed education to learn Mon."* The educational void was filled by religious institutions, as one participant stated, "*The only place that offered any sort of education was the local temple where I learned the Mon language*." The

temples became the primary source of education where there were no schools and acted as a complementary system to provide language instruction in the Mon language. Due to the effective ban on ethnic language use in schools in Myanmar, an ethno-nationalist, parallel school system has been in operation since the 1960s (Lall & South, 2014) and is tasked with promoting and preserving the Mon language. This system has effectively been transported to Malaysia, whereby the Mon learning centre functions in much the same way as their Mon school counterparts.

For parents whose children attend the Mon centre, language played a central role in why it was chosen. As one participant noted, "*They never learn Mon language in another school, and it is important to learn her own language*." Learning centres located nearby serve other communities and use different languages, as another participant commented, "*Our children can speak Mon language, but in (School name committed) they only speak Burmese*." This means that, according to one participant, "*parents don't send their children to other schools, because they don't understand Burmese*," which puts them at a disadvantage academically and immerses the children in a language that is not Mon. It is here that language finds a sense of connection to a Mon identity. One participant stated, "*If you don't learn your language will be sad. You will see your Mon people, and you cannot read and write your language, so you will be lost.*" This participant connects language to inclusion in the Mon group and without it, an individual would be disconnected and lost. Others view language as having a connection to Mon history, as one participant stated, "*The Mon language is important because if we don't teach them, they will not know their history*," and culture: "*All our generation can speak Mon, and it is very important for our culture."*

For these participants access to Mon history and culture is gained by knowledge of the language and it is with this that the children can enter and be active participants in the Mon community. Language is vital for the continuance of the Mon, and one day a week is dedicated to the learning of it: "*On Fridays we teach the Mon Language."* Furthermore, there is a real need for this due to the number of languages spoken by the students and the influence of languages in the host nation.

During informal conversations with students at the centre, a number of languages were reported to be spoken that included Mon and English, but also Thai, as some students had lived on the Thai/Burma border before arriving in Malaysia. For the most part, Mon was reported to be spoken by all the students (Table 5.2). The centre is a space for language immersion for the students as it is the primary language of communication by other students and the teachers.

Student	Spoken Language	Written Language
S1	Mon with family & Friends	Burmese /Mon Family and Friends
S2	Mon & English with family and Friends	English with family and friends - hard to find Mon on the phone
S3	Mon with family and friends	With friends English, parents can't write / read
S4	Mon and English	English as phone does not support Mon

Table 5.2: Students' Spoken and Written Language use

The written form of the language is cause for concern, though. In Table 5.2, only one student (S1) reported writing the language with family and friends. For the rest of the students, English was the preferred choice as it was the only option

available to them on their phone as Mon is difficult to find. Another student, S3, reported that they did not write so much as their parents could not write or read, so they were limited to verbal communication. Limitations of technology and with parents who may be illiterate and located far away leave the centre with the primary role of teaching and promoting literacy in the Mon language. It is here that Mon language classes on Fridays become more relevant, as it is a way to pass on literacy skills so that the written form is not relegated to a secondary position behind another language.

Literacy is valued in the centres, but one parent felt it needs to be improved, stating, "*My daughter can write a little bit of Mon and English, but her writing is not so good as her foundation is not good*." This parent is present in their daughter's life as they are one of the parents who live nearby, so they are able to assist with literacy skills. For the majority of students who live in the centre without the support of parents, the centre is the only option they have to gain these skills. Through language classes on Fridays and in other classes Mon is encouraged, such as computer class: "*For writing we advise them to learn in Mon language and English."* English, however, is ever-present given its dominance on the internet. Encouraging students to use Mon is just one method the centre uses to promote literacy in the Mon language. The students also have access to Mon books that are written in the Mon language. These books provide a textural identity to the students and demonstrate that not all learning has to be in English. This is especially important as many of the textbooks available for classes that teach science, math, and geography are written in English.

Language in the centre is a doorway that provides students access to Mon history and culture and brings them closer to a Mon identity. Promoting the

language means that the students increase their involvement and attachment to the ethnic group. It also increases dependence as increased proficiency in one language, and a rejection of others means a student's opportunities to communicate are limited to the languages they can use. The Mon language ensures that its survival is increased and provides another barrier that keeps the children firmly attached to a Mon identity, which lessens the influence of other languages.

The primary position that the Mon language has in the centre finds parallels across the literature in studies conducted in numerous countries around the world with refugees and immigrants (Brown, 2003; Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Francis et al., 2010; Karanja, 2010; Keevallick, 2010; Nagel & Staehle, 2005; Oh, 2012; Phinney et al., 2001a; Williams, 2012). Maintaining the ethnic language while in a host nation is a common need for many representatives who want to impart an ethnic language on their young. There are three key areas that may explain the importance of the Mon language in the centre and begin to explain why in Chapter 4, identity protection was so important.

First, in using the language, the centre maintains a transnational connection with the homeland (Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Francis et al., 2010). Secondly, as a minority group in a foreign land, preserving an ethnic language can be challenging (Zhou, 2001), especially if there are few places for it to be used (Portes & Schauffler, 1996). Rather than acquiesce and let the host nation's language or the language of another group dominate, the centre creates a space in which the students within are immersed in an ethnic language environment. This ensures the students are exposed to the language and gain spoken and literacy skills, without which the students would be susceptible to language acquisition from the host nation (Yok-Fong & Pellebon, 2012). Finally, the language for the Mon is deeply rooted in their history,

as one participant stated, "*The Mon language is important as it goes back to our history. There are ancient stones, many of them containing Mon writing, so you need it to read the stones.*" This provides a sense of pride for representatives from the Mon community, and something that can be passed down to a new generation to instill that same sense of pride (Kurien, 1998). In more recent times, speaking the Mon language is seen as an act of defiance as its use is a tool in which to resist the actions of the Myanmar government to subsume all the ethnic groups in the country under one national identity (Lall & South, 2013). The Mon, as well as many other groups, have struggled for many years to provide ethnic language classes (South & Lall, 2016). The act of maintaining the language in the centre continues this struggle transnationally and further shows their allegiance to their homeland and identity which is under threat.

Findings from the Mon centre have revealed that faith and language are salient aspects that contribute to how the imagined community is envisioned by the centre. These findings are based on an attachment to ethnic heritage. The next section explores an additional layer to the Mon centre's imagined community—one that focuses on the homeland and country of resettlement. To investigate this, the curricular used in the centre demonstrates what the centre is preparing their students for. At the same time, the subjects which are omitted highlight how the centre envisions their present and future.

In Preparation for…

Looking at the class schedule for the centre it becomes apparent that the subjects on offer play a larger role in how the imagined community is envisioned. The core team of teachers at the centre are ethnically Mon, and there are an

additional 8 volunteers to assist with the workload. The main subjects include math, science, English language, and Mon language, with Mon history classes provided to the older students. Access to textbooks is a challenge, but it highlights choices made by the centre that affect the future of the students. There are books available that teach the Mon language and encourage literacy. These are in the form of dictionary books with pictures and include some storybooks, all of which the students have access to. For the remaining subjects the books are in English. As one participant noted, "*Our books are from 2014 and were donated by the UNHCR. The syllabus is based on the Longman textbooks."* It is these textbooks that are used by some of the Mon teachers and the volunteers, who are mostly Malaysian, to teach science, math, and English. What is noticeably missing from the class schedule is the language of the host nation, Malay. This language is not formally taught and does not feature in any of the textbooks. The decision is based on a future need. There are a number of Malaysian volunteers who could assist with classes in the host nation language. Moreover, there are secondhand textbooks available in Malay which could be used to teach the language as well as to teach other subjects.

This is not a focus for the centre, though. For the centre, according to one participant, "*[t]he most important subject is English since we can use it around the world*." This is a sentiment shared by teachers and parents alike. For the parents who see their children on regular basis, bilingualism is promoted outside of school time. As one participant stated,"*At home I speak Mon and English to her*." For the students who board at the school, the Malaysian volunteers who teach classes in English provide further exposure to the language. The centre promotes English as it is a commodity that can be used in the future: "*We teach the subjects English, math and science because many are waiting for resettlement and need to continue*

studying." This is where English in the centre finds its purpose as there is a chance that if a family is resettled, their children will need to speak English within the new school. The routine initiated in the centre familiarises the students with a school-like environment so that they are somewhat prepared when they enter their new school. This is one rationale behind the exclusion of the host nation's language in the centre, as the future of the students is not envisioned in Malaysia. Yet, even the hope of resettlement is slowing beginning to dwindle, as the possibility of repatriation starts to become a reality.

In a move that further addresses the reality of going home, the centre made a significant addition to the languages learned: *"On Fridays we teach Mon in the morning and Burmese in the afternoon*." Until 2017, Fridays had been reserved for Mon language so that proficiency and literacy could be improved. Nevertheless, in a town meeting consisting of representatives from the Mon community it was decided that Burmese should also be taught. According to one participant, "*We had meeting on June 25th with parents and teachers and only a few Mon object to Burmese being taught."* The Mon language remains a vital aspect of Mon identity and continues to be promoted and used throughout the centre. The use of Burmese, however, represents a significant shift in what the centre is preparing the students for and the imagined community in which they are envisioned to enter. The reality for the centre and for some of the representatives is that even after many years waiting to be resettled, the process is taking longer, and other groups who are viewed as more at-risk are being resettled first. In a meeting with the UNHCR, the Mon community leader recalled, "*The UNHCR puts pressure to on leaders to send their community members home*." With fewer opportunities for resettlement the only option for some is to return home. As one participant stated, "*Recently more*

people are going back to Myanmar, but after 6 months they come back. The main town is improving a little, but in small villages they cannot do much. Also, the Myanmar government still goes to small villages to confiscate land." If a family decides to return home, schooling, for the most part, is conducted in Burmese. With the centre promoting Mon and English, limited proficiency in Burmese means a child would be severely disadvantaged academically should they enrol in a government school where Burmese is the language of instruction. There is a reluctance for the Burmese language to be taught in the centre, but there is also an acceptance that given the power dynamics in the homeland, there are few options available. As one participant stated, "*This year we decided to teach Burmese. Even if we hate some of them (*Burmese people*) we have to use their language, because when we go back to Myanmar they are holding the power."* This dramatic shift signals a change in what the centre is preparing their students for, as a focus on ethnic language preservation and preparation for resettlement now has to make space for possible repatriation. If the latter is the only option, Burmese will be needed. Some of the older children are proficient and even fluent in Burmese as they had lived in Myanmar for a number of years before coming to Malaysia. For the younger children this presents a more pressing need and a greater challenge to make sure they are ready should they return one day.

The centre has three areas in which it must now focus. The first is ethnic language preservation. Ensuring that there are ethnic teachers and some textbooks in the Mon language means that the children in the centre are immersed in a Mon language environment, which helps to improve spoken language proficiency and literacy. Without ethnic Mon teachers and Mon textbooks it is conceivable that the number of Mon language speakers in the centre would decline, as children would

acquire the language and literacy of the teachers who are conducting the classes. If these teachers were Malaysian it is likely that the primary language would be the common language spoken by those teachers.

The second focus is resettlement, the process of which can take many years with an outcome that is not guaranteed. In the meantime, the centre provides a school-like environment that incorporates a school routine with common subjects, such as math and science. Classes in the English language and volunteers who teach using English further help familiarise students to the kind of school community that they might enter if they are resettled. Finally, the centre has to prepare the students for repatriation. Although this has been implemented relatively recently, the perception of representatives from the Mon community is that there is less support from agencies like the UNHCR, who are the gatekeepers for resettlement. As support for teacher salaries and legal help from these larger agencies lessens, the centre is left even more isolated and with few options than to advise representatives to return home. Research has shown that language support is one aspect required for those entering into a new school (Hek, 2005; Rutter, 2006; Mathews, 2008; Ager & Strang, 2008; Ferfolja &Vickers, 2010; Taylor & Kaur-Sidhu, 2012). This is often thought of in terms of children who are resettled, yet in the case of this centre, language support is needed for resettlement, and more recently, for repatriation. This is especially salient for children who have been immersed in the Mon language and have little exposure to Burmese, which is what they will be expected to speak if they return home.

The Imagined Community

An analysis of the role of faith, language, and what the centre is preparing the students for provides the dissertation with an insight into the imagined community that the centre is envisioning (Table 5.3). The centre represents a point of convergence where faith and language meet so that those within experience the social world they are about to enter. Within the centre education, identity, language, literacy, community, and preparation for the future come together in order to socialise the children into a constructed Mon identity that aims to survive a transnational life while in Malaysia and one that will continue upon resettlement or possible repatriation. Even though individuals may live for a number of years, Malaysia is not an imagined community that the centre envisions its students entering or being part of. Rather, the centre facilitates an imagined community that looks inward for ethnic identity construction and promotion. Two areas that support this are the incorporation of faith, language, and literacy, which are closely intertwined as aspects connected to ethnic identity. These reinforce a Mon identity and create boundaries that separate individuals from other groups.

Language is a significant barrier, and excluding classes in the host nation's language, Malay, is further evidence that the Mon imagined community is not envisioned as having any connection to Malaysia. Instead, the centre focuses on ethnic language and English as a language that demonstrates a preparedness for entrance into a transnational imagined community that individuals will enter upon resettlement. A more contentious issue is the introduction of Burmese classes, which illustrates a significant shift in the imagined community from one that has a connection to the homeland and with an eye to resettlement, to one that reluctantly accepts that a closer connection with the homeland may be very likely. In this sense, the Mon imagined community is not fixed, and this, in many ways, represents the

fluid nature of refugees in protracted situations as they do not occupy a fixed space. The inclusion of Burmese language classes is a possible challenge to Mon identity as the language could be viewed as posing a threat to the survival of the Mon language. This highlights the fragility of the imagined community, yet shows how adaptable it is to change.

Religious Focus	Non-secular based on the Buddhist faith
Language Focus	Literate in and spoken proficiency in the Mon language
Other Language focus	English and Burmese as a second language
Language Environment	Immersion in the Mon Language with ethnic Teachers
Curricular focus	Math, Science, Mon History, Mon, English and Burmese Language Classes
Identity Focus	Construction and Maintenance of ethnic identity
Social Perspective of the Centre	Inward Looking / Rejection of outside social forces and influence
Preparation for	Resettlement to another country or the possibility for repatriation

Table 5.3: The Mon Learning Centre's Envisioned Imagined Community

The findings from this centre show that priority is given to the language that will be most beneficial in the future. In the case of this centre, the Mon language attaches an individual to an ethnic identity, while English prepares an individual for resettlement, and Burmese prepares for possible repatriation. This finding is in line with a study conducted in four international schools in Japan by Kanno (2003), who found that the primary language used in each was perceived to be in the best interest of the children's future. There is more crossover between the findings in this centre

and with Kanno (2003) where it was found that in one school for ethnically Chinese students, a Chinese identity was promoted to combat the influence of Japanese society. Francis et al. (2010) encountered a similar finding within a complementary school for ethnically Chinese students in the United Kingdom where they found that one purpose for the school was to "…*counter the 'threat' of 'Westernisation*'" (p. 108).

When seen from a micro perspective, the inward-looking nature of the centre is due to its focus on ethnic identity construction and maintenance. In doing so, the centre can create barriers so that external influence can be minimised. A meso-perspective of the centre, though, provides the opportunity to explore how larger structures impact and influence the imagined community envisioned by the centre. Refugees in Malaysia are marginalised and left on the peripheries of society. Often labelled as other, the centre replicates this position and further separates itself from the host society, which is similar to a finding by Kanno (2003). Admittance into a Malaysian imagined community is unlikely, so the learning centre creates an imagined community in which individuals feel welcome and connected to a shared identity. In doing this, the sense of protection is reinforced through a shared cultural boundary, as discussed in Chapter 4.

There is a sense of agency in the separation that is created as the centre is left isolated and to support itself. Yet, legal and social structures coerce the centre to make decisions that it may otherwise not have made. Increased pressure from the Malaysian government to detain and deport refugees in the country, and lessening international support for the UNHCR in Malaysia due to international conflicts means the Mon centre has lost financial support for teachers. Additionally, individuals hoping for resettlement face longer waits and delays as they are seen as

less at risk compared to other groups who are embroiled in conflicts. These structures compel the centre to re-envision its imagined community to one that has to include repatriation to the homeland as a realistic option. Providing classes in Burmese is one approach that the centre is taking, and its consequences on Mon identity may not be known for some time.

A sense of connectedness to the Mon ethnic groups and distance from the host nation is constructed by the non-secular nature of the centre and immersive environment in which the Mon language is promoted. This results in a Mon imagined community that provides individuals with a sense of who they are and where they belong. Yet, there are structures that are ever-present, and the findings from this dissertation show how they have influenced and shaped the Mon centre by compelling it to re-envision how their imagined community is constructed. What is apparent is that faith, language, and literacy, identity, aspirations for resettlement, or the possibility of repatriation are vital components in the imagined community, and the learning centre is central to ensuring its realisation.

The Rohingya Centre Analysis

Introduction

The Rohingya centre places great emphasis on the transmission of faith in the learning centre. Yet where other groups have promoted their ethnic language, the Rohingya centre has instead taken on the language of the host nation, which has influenced how the Rohingya centre's imagined community is constructed. Facing persecution and upheaval since World War II (Ibrahim, 2018), Rohingya who fled Myanmar for Malaysia largely chose the location as it enabled the preservation of Muslim identity, with the Muslim call to prayer a sign of reassurance that their faith

could be practiced without fear of reprisal (Azis, 2014). The Rohingya learning centre becomes a safe haven for individuals to maintain and construct who they are. As one participant stated, "*If the Rohingya children have no education, how are they going to learn about their history and culture? They are going to lose their heritage and identity*" (Azizan, 2017). The centre currently has around 100 students enroled with 30 students boarding, because, as one participant noted, "*some of the parents are working, so their children stay in the school*," and there are a small number of students who are orphans so the centre has taken on a guardianship role. With these students whose parents are absent, the role of the centre in ensuring the children have access to education becomes even more crucial.

The data from the Rohingya centre shows that while providing a safe place for children, and a place for religious affirmation, the centre acts as a bridge between the culture of the centre and Malaysian society. This is largely due to the Malaysian volunteer teachers in the centre who play a key role in educating the children, and as Malaysian citizens, they have different aims for the children whom they teach. As one participant stated, "*I want the children to be like Malaysian people, and for them to have the same opportunities*." The placement of Malaysian teachers results in a cultural shift in the centre away from being uniquely Rohingya to one that resembles a closeness to Malaysia. This may also have influenced the protective strategy outlined in Chapter 4. The host nation's language becomes the primary language, and textbooks in the host nation's language become the primary books used in the classroom. What remains consistent is faith. All but one of the Malaysian volunteers are Muslims, which allows the students to remain connected to Muslim identity. The following sections on faith, language, literacy, and

preparation will explore how these aspects inform the imagined community, which is envisioned by the learning centre.

Religious Focus

Islam has remained with the Rohingya via a transnational journey to Malaysia and has become an important aspect of self-identification. This is perhaps most evident when the ethnic make-up of the centre is investigated. One participant stated, "*Most of the students are Rohingya. However, some are Myanmar Muslim, but all students are Muslim.*" The participant, who is a teacher, stated that not all the students are actually Rohingya. Nevertheless, what matters is that they are Muslim—whether a student is Rohingya or Myanmar Muslim, Islam unites each individual under a common identity and focus, which may connect to a transnational Islamic identity and imagined community. The centre integrates faith into the school day with a non-secular approach. Prayers are conducted when students wake at 6am. There is then time for prayer at 2pm and again at 7pm. Prayer is often conducted in the centre itself in a room on the first floor, which doubles as a classroom, except for Fridays, where students attend a nearby mosque for Jumu'ah—the main prayer of the week. The school day is then separated into two parts. The morning session from 9am to 11:30am is reserved for academic study. After lunch and prayer, the afternoon session from 2pm to 5pm is scheduled for religious classes that focus on the teachings of the Quran as well as classes in Arabic literacy.

Religious classes are important for the learning centre to offer. They not only connect the children to a religious identity, but the classes could be a method by which to retain students in the centre. One participant noted, "*Attendance is*

difficult as students join and leave and there is no way to track where they are going." Aside from the Rohingya centre there is only one other option. According to one participant, though, "… *[T]he [other] school is mainly a madras for religious education,*" and "*Some of the students might go there if they are taken out of class here*." Some students have experience in the dual system. One participant shared, "*I went to a UN (United Nations) learning centre in morning and then in the evening a madrasa*." This demonstrates the intention and need of parents for their children to be immersed in a religious environment, and the Rohingya learning centre addresses this need by offering both academic and faith-based classes. With this, the hope is that parents will be more inclined to keep their children in the centre thereby reducing the number of days missed.

There are three main teachers that take the religious classes in the afternoon session. One teacher is Malaysian, the other is from Bangladesh, and the final teacher is a Rohingya. This individual is the only ethnic Rohingya teacher at the centre. One reason for this, according to one participant, is that "*[f]ew Rohingya could teach in other languages so they taught religious education*." In conversations with the centre, finding Rohingya teachers was difficult as many had little access to education in their homeland, plus working in informal employment pays more than working at the school.

The only Rohingya teacher available was one who could impart religious knowledge to the students. While there is only one ethnic Rohingya teacher, most of the remaining staff who are not Rohingya are Muslims, which highlights the on-going need of the centre to promote and maintain a religious identity that is rooted in the Islamic faith. Ultimately, in the words of one participant, "… *Islam is highly important to the Rohingya community*." Representatives from the community are

also weary of other religious groups, which may explain why a close-knit Islamic community has been established within the centre.

The role of the Rohingya centre as a place that maintains and promotes a religious identity is found in a number of other studies involving churches (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007; Kim, 2011; Chong, 1998; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Min, 1992). The centre functions as a vessel through which a religious message is passed on to the children. The non-secular nature of the centre and afternoons dedicated to faith-based classes demonstrate the importance that faith has in the Rohingya centre and for the representatives that it serves. One aspect which is more apparent is the connection to a religious identity though a connection to ethnic identity that is more opaque. In addressing this link, there is no clear evidence to suggest which one holds greater significance or influence (Williams, 1988), as some communities stress their religious identity, while others highlight their ethnicity (Yang & Ebaugh, 2001). For the centre, it seems that the former, religious identity, is a priority.

In the centre, children are exposed to faith with classes and symbolism in the clothing that is worn from headscarves for females and Islamic skull caps for males (see Chapter 5 for a more in-depth discussion). The environment retains an Islamic identity that is passed on to the children. The next section addresses language, and investigates how the use of Malay rather than the ethnic language is used for communication.

Language & Literacy Focus

The primary language used in the learning centre is that of the host nation, Bahasa Malay. While English, Mandarin, and Tamil have many speakers in the country, Malay was chosen to be the language of communication. On this, one of

the leaders of the centre who is ethically Rohingya commented that, "… *it's not that I don't want people to speak other languages, but in school Malay and English are important and if they know it, they can pick up the lessons better."* This refers to the classes which are largely conducted in Malay as the teachers use this as one of their primary languages. One participant stated, "*If I teach math, I use Malay, but simple words so they will understand*." For children who speak languages other than Malay, this can cause some problems in the classroom. Another participant stated, "*Culture differences and language, are challenging especially for the children coming from Rakhine state*." Without proficiency in the language, communication with the children becomes problematic, as one participant shared, "*When I first began, there were 17 kids and at the beginning teaching was tough as many of them could not speak Malay. Since then many of the kids have picked up Malay.*" The centre promotes both Malay and English, yet the former remains the dominant language in the centre as it is used by teachers for daily communication both in and outside the classroom. The proficiency in Malay is, therefore, slightly higher according to one participant: *"The children's Malay and English are limited but I'd say their Malay is better.*"

For children in the centre one participant said, "… *[I]t takes a month or so for students to adapt.*" This may refer to the environment of the centre, but language use remains varied. One participant noted, "*Kids use Malay and Rohingya language. Some of them understand Rohingya, but some cannot so they have to use Malay as a means of communication.*" To cope with the change in language, some students become translators and instruct others on what is happening when they do not understand. One participant, who is from Bangladesh and speaks the Rohingya language, was asked how many students would understand Rohingya; the

participant guessed that more than half could. The centre contains Rohingya students, but there are also students who identify as Myanmar Muslim and speak Burmese or other dialects as a primary language. Table 5.4 illustrates just how complex language usage is in the centre, as there are children who change language based on the person they are speaking to, such as student 1 (S1) who speaks Malay and Burmese to the father and Rohingya to the mother, or student 3 (S3) who speaks a different language to each sibling. What is consistent is the written form, as Malay is the primary language used for written communication.

Student	Spoken Language	Written Language
S1	Malay & Burmese - Father Rohingya - mother Friends - Malay, Rohingya	Malay
S2	Father - Malay Mother - Burmese Friends - Rohingya, Malay and Burmese	Doesn't write
S3	Mother & Father - Rohingya Elder sister - Malay Younger sister - Burmese Friends - Malay and Burmese	Malay
S4	Father - Malay Mother Rohingya Friends - Malay and Rohingya	Malay
S5	Parents - Burmese Friends Malay and Burmese	Malay, sometimes English and Burmese

Table 5.4: Students' Spoken and Written Language use

The textbooks in the centre are primarily in Malay, and when students are able to write, they can then go to the next class. Writing and reading in Malay is the main literacy aim of the centre. There are no classes in the Rohingya language, spoken or written, as there are no teachers in the centre who can facilitate these

classes. One rationale for the use of the Malay language, according to one participant, is that

> *… there are a lot of Chinese speakers in the area. And in the market nearby there are lots of Burmese people so they will speak it. At home the kids will speak in their mother tongue, so for a few hours in school they should be exposed to English and Malay*.

The immersive environment in Malay is designed to provide as much exposure as possible so that the students will gain proficiency and literacy in the language, with an aim to join the society they are currently in. One participant stated, "*We are hoping that at least they'll be able to read and write and engage with society here*" (Azizan, 2017).

Findings from the Rohingya centre are juxtaposed to that of numerous studies which find that ethnic language is placed in a primary position over the host nation's language (Phinney et al., 2001a; Brown, 2003; Nagel & Staehle, 2005; Keevalick, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Francis, Archer & Mau 2010; Karanja, 2010; Williams, 2012; ; Oh, 2012). There may be a practical rationale for the choice of language in the centre. The ethnic diversity found in the centre with some students who are Rohingya and others who are Myanmar Muslim, or come from mixed backgrounds, means Malay may be used as a lingua franca to avoid placing emphasis on one language that would show bias towards a specific ethnic group and may lead to conflict.

In addition, with a limited number of Rohingya who can teach in the centre, there are few options remaining than to use volunteers who can help, without which the children would be further disadvantaged as there would be fewer options for schooling. While the move to the use of the host nation's language is contrary to

findings that language creates transnational ties (Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; and Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010), it is conceivable that the centre is utilising the language of the host nation as a way to form new ties—ones that may involve the host nation itself. The next section explores what the centre is preparing the students for, and further investigates the possibility that the imagined community for the students in the Rohingya centre is one that involves the host nation.

In Preparation for …

The subjects taught at the Rohingya centre suggest what the students are being prepared for in the future. In terms of language, English features heavily, and there are classes offered for students of all ages. One rationale for the inclusion of the English was voiced by a representative from the centre: "*English is especially important, as it will help the children if they ever get resettled to another country*." English is seen as a tool by which to prepare children for a future life that may begin in an English-speaking country, as one participant stated, "*The Rohingya would go anywhere as long as they are welcome. Of course, if they had a choice between Malaysia, the U.K. or America many might choose America as it is perceived to be a better life.*" The inclusion of the language facilitates a future process of transmigration should the children and their families ever be resettled.

In preparing the students to possibly settle in another country, there is also evidence to suggest that the centre is preparing the students to settle in the country where they currently reside—Malaysia. The faith that is promoted and maintained in the centre is shared by the host nation, as Islam is the dominant religion in the country, and while remaining in Malaysia children in the centre and their families are free to practice their faith safe in the knowledge that they will not be persecuted.

In addition to this, language use at the centre, which is driven by the Malaysian teachers, further demonstrates a growing connection between the centre and the host nation. As a Rohingya representative from the centre stated in an interview, "*We are hoping that at least they'll (the children) be able to read and write and engage with society here*" (Azizan, 2017). Literacy is seen as a way for the children to connect, and the ability to read and write reduces the distance between the centre and the host nation. The teachers play a vital role in this process of language transference, and in doing so for one Malaysian representative, the goal is to reduce the gap between Rohingya and host nation. What is apparent from representatives is a desire to promote ties between the centre and host nation. In providing instruction in the host nation's language, the centre can facilitate acceptance. As one participant stated, "… *[I]]f they are given a chance and some legal recognition, they can make something of themselves and contribute to Malaysian society*" (Azizan, 2017). 'Engage with society,' 'contribute to society,' and to 'be like Malaysians' are all phrases that suggest a closeness and integration with the host nation. Likewise, the placement of Malaysian nationals as teachers and the host nation's language incorporated as the primary language furthers this.

Resettlement to another country is a long, arduous process, and only the most vulnerable Rohingya families will be chosen (Azis, 2014). Instead, the UNHCR in Malaysia has suggested that the most realistic solution is integration into the host nation, as many Rohingya can speak the local language and share the same faith (Azis, 2014). That said, Azis (2014) argued that "… since Islam is not a basis for solidarity, this shared Muslim identity is actually not a strong rationale for integration" (p. 849). Whether integration into the host society is the ultimate goal is unclear, but this will be discussed in Chapter 6. What is known is that for

individuals who are about to enter a new country, knowledge of the language is beneficial as it eases integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Ferfolja &Vickers, 2010; Hek, 2005; Rutter, 2006; Mathews, 2008; Taylor & Kaur-Sidhu, 2012). On the surface the Rohingya centre facilitates this with an approach to create ties between the centre and the host nation while preparing the children for possible resettlement with English language classes.

The Imagined Community

The analysis of faith, language, and what the centre is preparing for allows for the construction of the imagined community that is being envisioned by the Rohingya centre (Table 5.5). Faith in the centre is essential and is featured heavily with equal time provided for the learning of academic subjects and faith-based classes. In this sense, the morning sessions at the centre provide a school-like routine, whereas the afternoon sessions most resemble that of a madrasa, where religious instruction is the focus. The combination of both demonstrates the importance of faith in the imagined community and the need for children to remain attached to it. Another element of the imagined community is English, which features in the curriculum as a tool to be used in the event of resettlement, yet this is overshadowed by the only other language of instruction, Malay, the language of the host nation.

Religious Focus	Non-secular based on the Islamic faith.
Language Focus	Literate in and spoken proficiency in the Malay language
Other Language focus	English as a second language
Language Environment	Immersion in the Malay Language with ethnic Teachers
Curricular focus	Math, Science, English language, and Malay Language Classes

Identity Focus	Integration into host nation identity
Social Perspective of the Centre	Outward looking / Acceptance of outside social forces and influence
Preparation for	Possible settlement in Malaysia and/or resettlement to another country

Table 5.5: The Rohingya Learning Centre's Envisioned Imagined Community

The children in the centre are multi-lingual, with some speaking Rohingya, Burmese, and even Malay if they come from a mixed background. Malay replaces these ethnic languages in the centre and becomes the primary tool for communication and learning, without which a child would be at a disadvantage as they would not be able to understand instructions or follow the textbooks. The imagined community, which is being envisioned in the centre, is one that incorporates the host nation's language. The impact of this is that ethnic languages are spoken by the students informally, but the host nation's language is recognised as the primary language of the imagined community. Language forms a bridge between the centre and the host nation, and the Malaysian teachers in the centre are instrumental in the construction and development of this. The imagined community that is envisioned by the centre is one that seeks closeness and connection with the host nation. It is outward-looking as it incorporates the host nation into its ecosystem. The result is that the children within are familiarised to the host nation, and individuals in the host nation are familiar with attributes that the children are demonstrating, such as faith and language use.

The decision to include the host nation's language is similar to a finding by Kanno (2003), who found that the language that offers the best opportunities will be featured more prominently. The Rohingya centre most resembles one of the

international schools in Kanno's (2003) study whereby a school made up of foreign nationals promotes the use of Japanese as the students will eventually enter into Japanese society, so there is no support for L1 maintenance provided. Unlike findings that in some instances, school was a place to counterbalance the dominance of the host society by promoting an ethnic identity (Kanno, 2003; Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010), the Rohingya centre instead envisions an imagined community which includes the host nation.

When the Rohingya centre is analysed through a meso-lens, it is possible to find rationale for closer ties with the host nation than the homeland. In 1962, all Rohingya-based political and social organisations were forbidden by the Burmese government after years of tensions between the two groups (Ullah, 2011). In the years to follow, the Rohingya were excluded from a national registry resulting in over 200,000 leaving for Bangladesh (Ullah, 2011). They faced expulsion from the country by the military in 1977 and 1992 (Abdelkader, 2014; Thawnghmung, 2016) and stripped of any form of citizenship and deemed to be Bengali in 1982 (Thawnghmung, 2016). In effect the Rohingya have no home to return to. It is this fact that some Rohingya feel sets them apart from other groups, as they have been denied citizenship and have nowhere to call home (Azis, 2014)—and this is likely to continue.

As of 2018, over 700,000 Rohingya are in refugee camps, with the Bangladesh army poised to force individuals back into the Rakhine state; however, under fear of more violence upon returning, many are refusing to go (Ellis-Peterson, Safi & Rahman, 2018). This is a transnational structure that began in Myanmar but influenced the imagined community, which is envisioned by the centre in Malaysia. As such, the imagined community responds to the eventuality that repatriation is

not an option. In lieu of this, initiatives are set up to prepare those for a possible life in Malaysia or abroad, such as the partnership with a local Malaysian charity.

The imagined community envisioned by the learning centre provides an avenue through which to integrate identity. One that holds virtues that are important to the Rohingya, such as faith, but also an identity that connects to the host nation. Through the learning of the language and development of literacy skills, children can more easily adapt to the host nation, fit in, and become invisible, as discussed in Chapter 4. Then, should the Malaysian government relent and provide Rohingya in Malaysia with the opportunity to work and engage in society, the children will be ready. There is potential for this to occur as the newly elected government as of 2018 has suggested that refugee groups, with the Rohingya mentioned specifically, would be legitimised and granted access to work, health care, and schooling (Pakatan Harapan, 2018; "Government to Consider," 2019; Aiman, 2019). What is evident is that the continuance of the Islamic faith and immersion in the host nation's language is vital to the imagined community envisioned by the Rohingya learning centre.

The previous sections discussed the centres independently of each other. The following section provides a cross-comparative analysis of all three centres in order to search for relationships and divergence. This is then followed by a discussion on how social structures prescribe each centre's imagined community and the degree to which individuals have an agency to affect this. The section concludes with a discussion of the influence that the imagined community has over the construction of identity.

General Discussion

An analysis of faith, language, and what the centres are preparing students for allowed the dissertation to identify how each learning centre envisions their imagined community (IC) (Table 5.6). The inclusion of faith is an aspect shared by the imagined community of each centre. In doing so, each centre creates a non-secular environment for the promotion and maintenance of their faith. Kim (2011) found that a concern for many immigrants is establishing a version of their religion in the new country where they have settled. To address this, the Rvwang and Mon created a place of worship which is located above the learning centre, and the Rohingya have forged a relationship with a nearby mosque. The learning centre, therefore, becomes an extension of the religious institution and acts as a vessel through which a religious message is promoted. The importance of faith in the community should not be overlooked, as once established, religious institutions can influence the social group to which they are attached: "(a)s a powerful force in many communities, the Church can strengthen and encourage behaviour change on the part of its membership and community at large" (Eng, Hatch & Callan, 1985, p. 82). The inclusion of faith into each centre's imagined community demonstrates the salience that it has in the community. Churches have been found to promote religious identities (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001), as well as their maintenance and promotion (Chong, 1998; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003; Kim, 2011; Min, 1992; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001) and the learning centres in the dissertation function in much the same way. Faith is an inextricable aspect of the imagined community, and one that Tiryakian (2011) argued is noticeably missing from Anderson's (1983) original conception of imagined communities and latter studies that adopt the theory.

Focus	Rvwang Centre	Mon Centre	Rohingya Centre
Religious Focus	Non-secular based on the Christian faith	Non-secular based on the Buddhist faith	Non-secular based on the Islamic faith
Language Focus	Literate in and spoken proficiency in the Rvwang language	Literate in and spoken proficiency in the Mon language	Literate in and spoken proficiency in the Malay language
Other Language focus	English as a second language	English and Burmese as a second language	English as a second language
Language Environment	Immersion in the Rvwang Language with ethnic Teachers	Immersion in the Mon Language with ethnic Teachers	Immersion in the Malay Language with ethnic Teachers
Curricular focus	Math, Science, English language and Rvwang Language Classes	Math, Science, Mon History, Mon, English and Burmese Language Classes	Math, Science, English language and Malay Language Classes
Identity Focus	Construction and Maintenance of ethnic identity	Construction and Maintenance of ethnic identity	Integration into host nation identity
Social Perspective of the Centre	Inward Looking / Rejection of outside social forces and influence	Inward Looking / Rejection of outside social forces and influence	Outward looking / Acceptance of outside social forces and influence
Preparation for	Resettlement to another country	Resettlement to another country or the possibility for repatriation	Possible settlement in Malaysia and/or resettlement to another country
Imagined Community (IC)	Envisioned inwards and centred on preserving the ethnic identity of the homeland. This transnational connection extends to preparing for potential entrance into the IC of a resettlement country	Envisioned inwards and centred on preserving the ethnic identity of the homeland. This transnational connection extends to preparing for potential entrance into the IC of a resettlement country or repatriation to the homeland	Envisioned outwards and centred on preserving a transnational Islamic identity while developing closer ties with the host nation

Table 5.6: A Cross-Comparative View of the Rvwang, Mon, and Rohingya Learning Centre's Envisioned Imagined Community

Where relationships can be found between each centre in terms of the inclusion of faith in the imagined community, language is a far more complex and

contentious area. Table 5.6 illustrates this conflict by showing that the Rvwang and Mon centres promote their ethnic language, while the Rohingya centre promotes the language of the host nation. This disparity is worth investigating as it demonstrates a vital difference in how each imagined community is envisioned.

The Rvwang and Mon centres view language as being connected to a sense of ethnic identity, the promotion of which to the next generation provides a tool to access a shared community identity. Language for these groups connects an individual to culture (Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Keevallik, 2010), provides a connection to the homeland (Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010), helps to tackle assimilation (Nagel & Staeheli, 2005), is used as an identity marker (Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010), and connects the individual to the group. A concern of disconnection was reported by participants in both the Rvwang and Mon centres, who felt that without proficiency in the ethnic language, an individual would not be able to connect with others in the same group. One function of the imagined community then is to provide instruction in the ethnic language through learning and social interaction so that an individual can become more closely connected with the group through language.

The Rohingya centre approaches language from a different perspective as the student body speaks a number of languages due to their diverse ethnic backgrounds and family structures. The incorporation of the host nation's language may be a method by which to mitigate the potentially divisive task of assigning one ethnic language—one which may cause parents to demand that their language is used. The host nation's language thus becomes a lingua franca in the centre. Yet, the use of the host nation's language significantly influences how the Rohingya centre envisions their imagined community, and this creates divergence from the

Rvwang and Mon imagined communities. One contributing factor to the construction of the imagined community for all the centres are the teachers and whether they share the same ethnic background and language as the students who are being taught. This is the case with the Rvwang and Mon centres. For the Rohingya centre, many of the teachers share the same faith, yet the nationality and language of the teachers are connected to the host nation, and this has influenced how the Rohingya centre's imagined community is envisioned.

In terms of preparation, all three centres demonstrate similarities. Each centre creates an environment that mimics that of a fully functioning school. The rationale for this is so that the students will be familiar and prepared should they ever be resettled to a country and into its schooling system. This connects to the next similarity, which is English language, and is promoted in each centre as a second language that is studied by the students. The inclusion of the English language is again a preparatory measure as if a student is resettled, some proficiency in the language would be beneficial. In this sense, the imagined communities are not fixed to the present, as there is potential to enter the imagined community of another nation, and language knowledge is one way of ensuring the transition. The centres are anticipating what many studies state is essential for integration into a new school, which is information on the subjects and language support (Hek, 2005; Rutter, 2006; Mathews, 2008; Ager & Strang, 2008; Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010; Taylor & Kaur-Sidhu, 2012). The findings from the aforementioned studies focus on the country of resettlement, yet the findings in the dissertation demonstrate that the centres, through the imagined communities, are already preparing children in advance for the possibility of resettlement. The inclusion of the English language into each centre brings a transnational goal to the imagined community, as each

centre envisions their students entering into imagined communities that are external to their own, and exposure to English provides an access point for this.

The main takeaway from this discussion is that the Rohingya learning centre seems to envision an imagined community that connects them to a wider Muslim community which correlates to a finding by Gogonas (2011). Conversely, the Rvwang and Mon centres' imagined communities connect them transnationally to the homeland, while simultaneously a temporal element envisions a future life in a country of resettlement. The connection that the Rohingya have with being part of a Muslim imagined community means they are more aligned with life in Malaysia, and the potential for a closer relationship to the host nation is more likely. For the Rvwang and Mon, however, their imagined communities reject a relationship with Malaysia in favour of the homeland or new land.

The Influence of Structure on the Learning Centres

Faith, language, and preparation for transnational communities all influence the imagined communities which have been envisioned by the centres. In the construction of these, one additional aspect to explore is the role of agency and structure. On the one hand, each centre displays agency by deciding what faith and language to incorporate, and how students should be prepared for the future. Refugee communities have been found to display agency against obstacles and barriers placed upon them by the state (Palmgren, 2013). This is supported by MacKenzie, McDowell, and Pittaway (2007), who argued that even people who have lived under oppression and other forms of abuse or social pressure find ways in which to gain agency within their lives. Bandura (1989) elaborated, stating, "Among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than

people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives" (p. 1175). Nevertheless, the protracted situations of the participan the dissertation study leave them in a position of reduced power that is influenced by structures with significantly more power.

State educational institutions are a central point for the transmission of information on the social boundaries that form the imagined community in a nation (Bleich, 1999). What constitutes the information that is passed on is not decided on-site at each school, as national curricular, policy, and the aims of the current government oversee how the imagined community is constructed and transmitted by schools. Yet, even nations with seemingly strong notions of how the imagined community is constructed can be threatened by social structures. The U.K. envisions an imagined community around a multicultural model of acceptance (Bleich, 1999). Social forces that have emerged over the last few decades have set to challenge this. Brexit may have illuminated and brought social divisions into the headlines, but this was a long-simmering issue. In a detailed analysis of Brexit and the years preceding it, Eatwell and Goodwin (2018) argued that "nearly twenty years of research have shown, what is just as important, if not more so, are people's fears about how immigration and ethnic change are seen to threaten their national identity" (p. 132). It is still too early to tell what effect this social view will have on the British imagined community. What this does illustrate is that even a nation's imagined community is not immune to powerful social change. Therefore, to contrast this, the next section explores the influence that structures have had on how the learning centres' imagined communities are envisioned.

The learning centres are a physical representation of the agency as expressed by the representatives from the communities that have established them.

In doing so, each centre has chosen to incorporate their own faith, decided what language should be used, and ultimately decided what students need to be prepared for. These agentic choices are also heavily influenced by structures that affect agency (Table 5.7). The first structure is internal and is found in the background of the teachers who work at the centres. In the case of the Rvwang and Mon centres, there are primarily ethnic teachers who use the ethnic language, so this allows each centre to maintain and promote their language. The Rohingya centre is limited in its choices on language usage, as the only teachers available come from outside of their in-group and bring a language that is foreign to all the participants in the centre. In this sense, agency over language choice is affected by the teachers who are present in the centres, the consequences of which are analysed in Chapter 6. The same can be said for curricular and textbooks, as they are limited to the materials that are available. A centre wishing to teach an ethnic language is not only restricted to the background of the teacher, but to the resources that are available to teach that language. These structures impact agentic choices in the centres, and therefore significantly influence how a centre can envision its imagined community.

Structure	**Example**
Internal Structures	Teacher's background Curriculum and textbooks
Legal Structures	Immigration Law UNHCR support
Transnational Structures	Lack of citizenship recognition Assimilation into national identity

Table 5.7: Aspects that affect learning centre agency

The next structure is legal and places the imagined communities envisioned by the centres at odds with the larger imagined community envisioned by the host nation. In this imagined community, refugees are portrayed as a threat and are unwelcome in the country. The Rvwnag and Mon centres have, in turn, reciprocated and interpreted this as a threat to their own imagined communities. Malaysia is thus viewed as a temporary location, as there is no expectation that individuals from the learning centre will need to contribute to Malaysian society. The Rohingya centre, however, favours a closeness with the host nation. The presence of the Malaysian teachers and use of the language has affected the decisions made by the centre to opt for a closer integration rather than separation with the hope that the students are accepted into the larger Malaysian society. The next legal structure concerns the UNHCR and the international community. With resources moved away from Malaysia to countries where the need is seen as greater, there is less support for individuals in Malaysia to be resettled. This affects how each centre prepares for the future. With the opportunity for resettlement becoming less realistic, centres such as the Mon have made provisions for their students for the possibility to return home. The main point here is that legal structures have been interpreted differently by the centres, and have affected the choices that they make in how they exist in Malaysia and their preparations for the future.

The final structure is transnational and rooted in the homeland. Though the centres are located and function in Malaysia, they are still susceptible to transnational structures. First, as a result of legal structures, the Mon community is advising their representatives that repatriation is the only option should they not

want to remain in Malaysia. The consequence of returning home is that Myanmar pushes a single national identity, which is in conflict with the Mon ethnic heritage. Yet, to integrate into the Myanmar educational system means that the Mon centre must provide language classes in Burmese as it is the official language. The structures imposed by the Burmese government in Myanmar, which initially led the Mon to establish their own educational system abroad, has travelled transnationally to exert its influence. The Rohingya centre also finds itself affected by the structures imposed in Myanmar. By not being recognised as citizens in their country of birth since 1982 (Thawnghmung, 2016), the Rohingya are less likely to be able to return home. They are left with the option to either repatriate or settle in the country where they currently reside because the Rohingya are not part of how other ethnic groups in Myanmar imagine the Myanmar community. An important finding for this study is that the participants are not only coping with structures that are present in Malaysia, but have to manage transnational structures which still exert influence on the participants and the learning centres even after leaving the homeland.

There is evidence that both agency and structure affect the imagined community, with both playing an integral role in influencing and shaping the imagined communities envisioned by each centre. Because of this, the imagined communities do not exist in a vacuum—they are fluid and are forced to adapt to structures that are imposed upon them.

Although researchers claim that refugees can make agentic decisions when faced with structures (MacKenzie, McDowell & Pittaway, 2007; Palmgren, 2013), the protracted nature of the participants who have established and use the learning centres means that agency will often succumb to structures that exert more influence as the people who manage and use them are in a position of powerlessness.

In fact, the power refugees in protracted situations possess is weakened to the extent that structures still continue to exert their power outside of the homeland, and follow individuals along the fragmented journey. This concept has largely gone unreported as it is assumed that ties are severed once an individual leaves a country. In reality, these ties are strong and impact the lives and educational decisions made by the participants in this dissertation.

Towards a Conceptualisation of Identity Construction within the Imagined Community

The previous section compared and contrasted the findings between each learning centre and explored the role of agency and structure as an influential factor in the construction of each centre's imagined community. In one final point, an exploratory theoretical discussion investigates the learning centres in terms of their potential to influence identity construction once an individual has entered the imagined community constructed by the centre. In concluding a study on the imagined communities of four schools, Kanno (2003) found that "[s]chools' visions of imagined communities, whether they be implicit or explicit, exert a powerful influence on their current policies and practices, ultimately affecting the students' identities" (p. 298). Building on this finding, an emerging conceptualisation was developed to demonstrate how identity may be influenced when an individual enters a centre's imagined community (Figure 5.1).

By entering the centre an individual is not entering a hollow space void of meaning. Rather, as Werlen (1993) and Ehrkamp (2005) suggested, places can influence the social lives of those within. Once enroled in the centre, an individual receives transferable attributes such as faith, language, and culture that are acquired

in class and through social interactions with representatives who promote and maintain the centres' imagined community. These representatives are the teachers and staff who are physical representations of the imagined community, and as such their presence directly influences which imagined community is being envisioned. The process in the centre is reciprocal as it continually feeds into itself—reasserting the imagined community and influencing the identity of the individual.

Carroll, Motha, and Price (2008) noted, "Identity has come to be widely understood as socially constructed within both interpersonal relationships and larger sociocultural structures formed through institutions and ideologies" (p. 166). The authors go on to state, however, that "[w]hile heavily influenced by these structures and their constituting discourses, identity is not completely predetermined by them. Rather we are constantly constructing our identities in interpersonal relationships within specific communities as we appropriate certain discourses, reproducing them but also remaking them anew" (Carroll et al., 2008, p. 166).

The work of Carroll et al. (2008) can be adapted and applied to the context of the centres in the disseration. The centre is the institution, and through the imagined community, there is potential for the identity of individuals to be influenced by interpersonal relationships formed with individuals who share the same ethnic background. This point is salient as the centres adopt a guardianship role: many of the family members are either working long hours and are absent most of the day, or work far away and have few opportunities to visit their children. Parents are seen as key figures in helping children to attach a sense of identity (Phinney, 2001b citing the work of Bernal, Knight, Garza, Ocampo, & Cota, 1990; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990), so in their absence, enrolment into the

learning centre and then subsequent entrance into the imagined community fills an identity void for the children whose parents are not around. The findings on the influence of school are

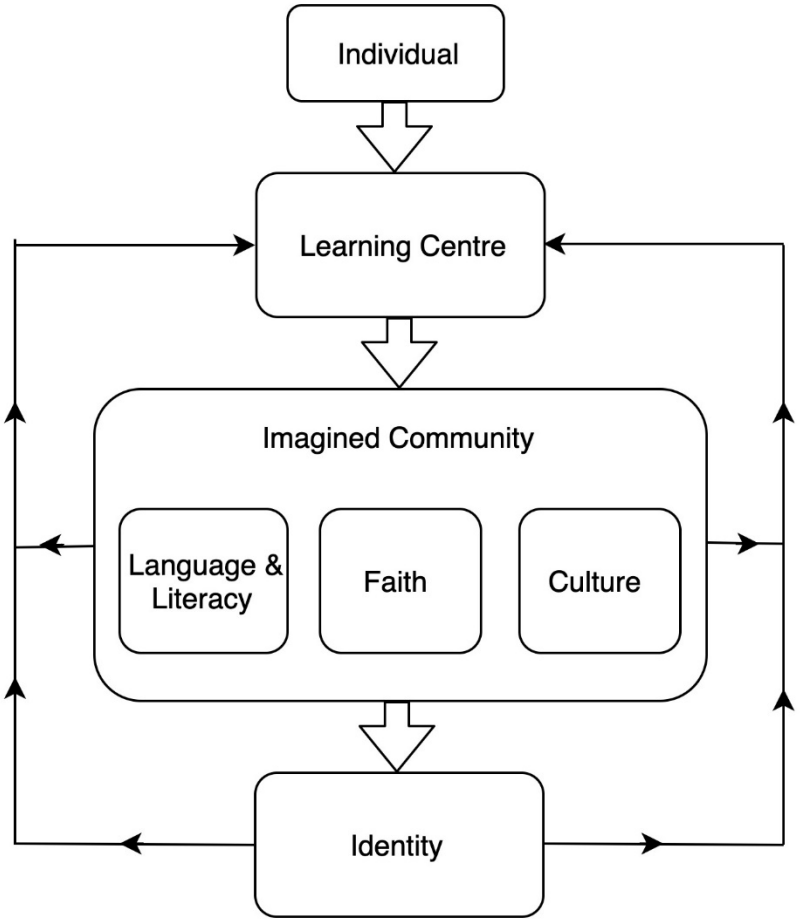

Figure 5.1: The Influence on Identity upon Entrance into a Centre's Imagined Community

congruent with many studies (Archer et al., 2010; Carter, 2006; Carter & Goodwin, 1994; DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Francis et al., 2010; Gay, 1978; Locke, 1996; Wei, 2006). The schools in the study were seen as vital to the communities who felt that while their children received a good education in state schools, aspects of their

identity such as language, culture, and faith were not represented, and this created a fear that it would be lost. This point is even more pressing for minority and marginalised groups, as identity is continually being constructed (Carroll et al. 2008), and they are more at risk of being influenced by the dominant language, cultures, and faiths that encircle them (see Chapter 6 where acculturation is discussed in this context). This is why the learning centres in the disseration play such a vital role; they contain the imagined community that provides exposure to an identity.

The hard border of the centre ensures that what is constructed within remains unobstructed and free to develop. Figure 5.1 does not present a fully formed conceptualisation of how identity is constructed within the imagined community, but this could be used by researchers as a starting point to investigate the influence of learning centres on identity construction and maintenance, which is especially prevalent for refugees in protracted situations. While more research is required to study identity in learning centres, the disseration does find congruence with research conducted with complementary schools in the U.K. The researchers concluded that, as with the disseration, the schools are complex sites for identity reproduction and ongoing construction for diasporic identities (Archer et al., 2010; Francis et al., 2010; Tereshchenko & Archer, 2015).

Conclusion

The findings from this chapter provide the first account of how imagined communities (ICs) are constructed and facilitated by learning centres. Using ICs as a lens provided this chapter with the tools by which to explore what role language, faith, culture, and provisions for the future play in each IC. A salient finding from

the disseration is that the learning centres are not homogenous structures. Each centre has a highly personalised IC that speaks directly to the immediate and future needs and aspirations of the communities they serve. This heterogeneity reflects the ethnic, social, and linguistic boundaries that have been established by numerous refugee communities in Malaysia (Hoffsteader 2014; Munir-Asen, 2018), and learning centres are a further extension of this separation. What this actually means in the context of this disseration is that representatives from their respective communities place a high value on components related to identity, and in order to transmit these to the next generation, the learning centres become the central place for this to occur outside of the family within the imagined community.

Figure 5.2 outlines three core areas for the construction of an imagined community as found in the disseration and includes identity, structure, and preparation. Future studies will inevitably reveal additional areas, but these are dominant themes that were consistent in this chapter. Identity is condensed into language, religion, and culture and these are areas that can be transmitted to children in the learning centres. Preparation is vital as it dictates what subjects are taught in the centres, providing there are teachers to conduct these classes. One example is the use of English language, and its presence in the curriculum is geared towards the aspiration for resettlement and the need to speak English should the family be settled in an English-speaking country.

The final area is structure, and this is influential on all levels. The creation of the imagined community and learning centres are both examples of agentic choices, but there are limits to this agency. The learning centre is influenced by legal structures that might result in its closure by authorities. Moreover, the imagined community itself is threatened by legal structures that could prevent

resettlement, which results in inclusion of other languages to allow children to manage the process of repatriation. Facilitated by the learning centres, imagined communities are powerful constructions that are unique to each community. Through these ICs, the hopes and aspirations of the community are propelled into the next generation.

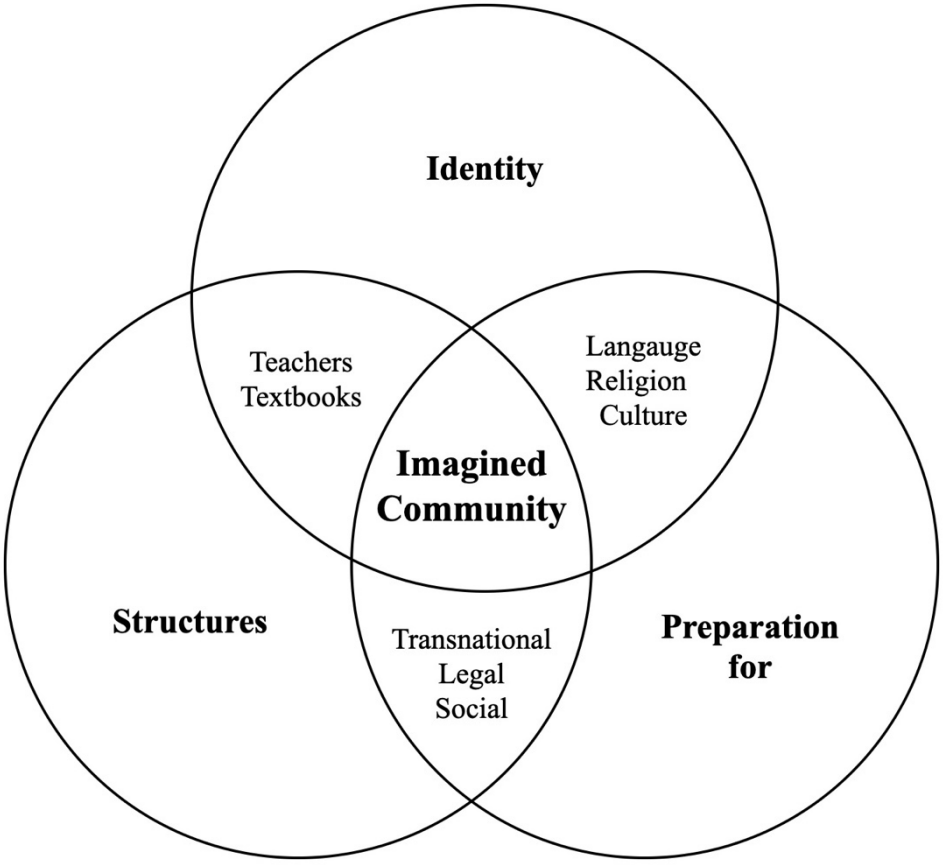

Figure 5.2: Components for the construction of an imagined community

More importantly, the ICs manage uncertainty as they provide an anchor point for children to attach a sense of belonging while preparing them for a future in Malaysia, another host nation, or the homeland. This is a significant contribution to knowledge as previous to the disseration, learning centres were viewed as containers for protection from physical and emotional harm as well as the learning

of subjects. This chapter has opened a new line of enquiry into learning centres—one that views them as hosting complex social environments where identity and preparation for the future play a vital role in the lives of the children who are enroled. This may go some way in explaining why, unlike the Rohingya, the Rvwang and Mon have resisted partnering with a Malaysian charity for fear of losing control over how the imagined community is envisioned.

The imagined community, which is envisioned and fostered by each learning centre, creates a social boundary that either works in unison with the host nation (Rohingya) or is in opposition to it (Rvwang and Mon). Precisely why each group has a different approach to the host nation is explored in Chapter 6. What is evident from the findings in this chapter is that the imagined communities are vital to these groups as they navigate their fragmented journey. Eatwell & Goodwin (2018) discussed the impact that hyper-ethnic change has had on populations with high immigration and partially attribute this to a rise in populism. The authors explained that it "reflects deep-rooted public fears about how a new era of immigration and hyper ethnic change could lead to the destruction of their wide group and way of life" (p. 132). The authors stress this not about racism, but the loss of a perceived community and national identity which impacts the social boundary and imagined community. The potential crossover here is that the participants in the disseration have been uprooted from their homes and find themselves in an environment where this new social world is markedly different from the homeland. This may explain why the Rvwang and Mon learning centres stress an imagined community with closer connections to the homeland, while the Rohingya's imagined community finds some similarities in the Islamic identity that is present in Malaysia. Thus, the Rohingya's imagined community is more open to

change as there is an element of familiarity, which in turn influences the protective strategy outlined in Chapter 4. This chapter demonstrated that in much the same way state schools are used "for transmitting information about the boundaries of national membership" (Bleich, 1999, p. 64), the learning centres in the disseration serve a similar purpose. They reflect the boundaries of each community's imagined community and incorporate information (language, faith, culture) that is specifically important to its construction and preservation.

Chapter 6 – Acculturation

Introduction

Building on the role of school as an ethnic safe space (see Chapter 4), and how information is transmitted to create the social boundaries of an imagined community (see Chapter 5), schools are also seen as central to the process of acculturation for immigrant adolescents (Bartlett et al., 2017; Crul, Keskiner, Schneider, & Lelie, 2017; Pianta, 2006; Van Oudenhoven et al., 2016; Vedder & Motti-Stefanidi, 2016). Similar to the way a nation's imagined community is delivered through the wider educational system, schools are influential sites for socialisation into the host nation. The way in which this occurs is through the primary language used in the school, the curricula, learning materials, and teachers (Dona & Young, 2016; Leopold & Shavit, 2013), all of which reflect the values and culture of the host nation (Berry & Sam, 2016; Pianta, 2006; Oppedal & Toppelberg, 2016). While schools execute what is mandated for them to teach by the government and whether there is a large population of immigrants enroled or not, the focus favours the dominant group (Oppedal & Toppelberg, 2016).

Nonetheless, schools remain a powerful and influential force in the lives of children who quickly adapt to the culture and the language of the school (Deng & Marlowe, 2013; Young & Chan, 2014), often to the detriment of their ethnic language and culture. In discussing the impact of French schools on the acculturation of minority adolescents, Bleich (1999) citing a study by Centre for Educational Research and Innocation (CERl) (1987) stated

> … the school was a powerful factor in the abandonment by the children of immigrants of their culture of origin; for their generation this stigmatisation

> was a fundamental psychological incentive which filled them with a fierce determination to integrate within the French society by ridding themselves of the slightest trace of any difference (p. 25).

The previous findings are significant for the disseration as they demonstrate the impactful role schools have on the adaption of children to a new society and environment. So far, the literature has shown how children are acculturated into the new country through educational institutions. In the case of the disseration, children are in learning centres that reflect their ethnic background and not that of the host society. Therefore, this chapter explores acculturation from this perspective and examines if the centres are able to retain ethnic boundaries or if they are influenced by the society around them.

The focus lies primarily on how the participants have adapted to life in Malaysia. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, the protracted situation of refugees means that many years will be spent in the country before a resolution to their fragmented journey can be found (Hoffstaedter, 2014; "The Long Wait," 2015; Low et al., 2014). In addition to this, refugees have to contend with what Dryden-Peterson (2017) deemed 'unknowable futures,' which to a large extent underscore the protracted position of the participants in the disseration as they traverse uncertain trajectories. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to explore how participants have approached change and uncertainty, but more importantly, what role and function the learning centres have played during this process.

How the participants and learning centres in the disseration have dealt with the concept of exile can be explored through the manner in which individuals have adapted to life in the country, either by language use or even by the clothes that are worn. Schools are the dominant institution outside of the family (Trickett & Birman,

2005), so investigating these areas within the social world of the learning centres demonstrates how they are guiding the children through the process of living in a foreign land. The process by which an individual manages change during intercultural contact is known as acculturation, and the work of Berry (1997) provides an overarching analytical lens for this chapter.

To complement this, additional lenses that focus on clothing and language provide further analytical weight to investigate these areas in relation to the participants and the learning centre. This analysis is combined with the main findings from Chapters 4 and 5 to construct how each centre responds to acculturation. The final area this chapter investigates is why each centre has responded to acculturation in this manner, and the work on Core Values (Smolicz, 1981) proves invaluable in exploring the rationale. The next section begins with an overview of acculturation and how it is conceptualised for this chapter.

Analytical Lens: Acculturation

Acculturation is the term given to individuals and groups who experience psychological and/or cultural change during intercultural association (Berry, 2003). This does not occur in a vacuum (Massey & Mullan, 1984), as the process of acculturation affects all individuals and groups (Sam & Berry, 2010). It can influence language, clothing, faith, and culture, especially in those who have not yet attached themselves to a specific identity. The process of acculturation has been conceptualised into four parts to explain how adaption occurs (Berry, 1997).

To determine which aspect of acculturation is occurring, there are two overarching areas of enquiry: group and psychological (Figure 6.1). The former refers to acculturational aspects that encompass cultural, physical, economic, social,

and biological attributes (Sam & Berry, 2010), with the central tenet that "… a group can penetrate (or ignore) the other, and groups can remain culturally distinct from (or merge with) each other" (Berry, 2001, p. 617). The latter, psychological acculturation, is often investigated on an individual level and covers aspects which include coping, behavioural shift, anxiety, stress, and adaption (Sam & Berry, 2010), and are referred to as acculturation attitudes. In looking at these two areas, Sam and Berry (2010) identify two issues when it comes to the acculturation of the group and the acculturation of the individual. On group aspects the key issue is "…the degree to which people wish to have contact with those who are outside their group and participate with them in the daily life of the larger society," while a central issue for individual acculturation is "…the degree to which people wish to maintain their heritage cultures and identities" (Sam & Berry, 2010, p. 476). This field has been investigated from various different perspectives in isolation, which has led Trickett

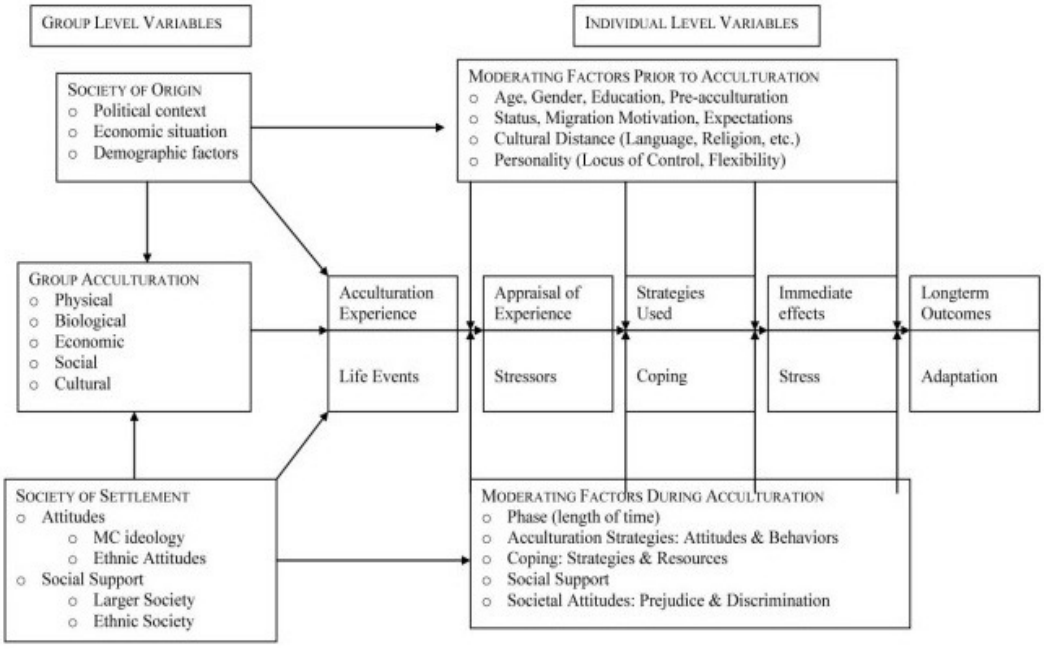

Figure 6.1: A Framework for Acculturation Research, Berry (1997, p.15)

and Birman (2005) to argue that acculturation is a multidimensional process that should combine areas such as language, identity, and behaviour. For the purpose of the disseration, individual behaviour is explored though clothing and linguistic acculturation, while group-level acculturation is discussed in relation to the responses of the learning centres.

This chapter investigates two aspects that are specific to individual acculturation: clothing and language. The clothing worn by the students in the learning centre and the parents gave an insight into the extent to which the participants had adapted or adjusted to the host society. Language is an even more salient aspect of the acculturation process as knowledge of the host nation's language suggests a greater level of adjustment or integration. This chapter culminates in a discussion on group level acculturation from the point of view of the learning centre where the acculturation response being employed is identified and discussed.

Dress Acculturation

An area not often referred to in acculturation literature is clothing, yet it is a very visible representation of how an individual chooses to interact with the new society in which they find themselves. Clothing distinguishes the individual and attaches them to culture, history, faith, and group, demonstrating the extent to which a person is willing to retain their ethnic identity. Research has found that entering a new society may change a person's clothing style in order to integrate more seamlessly into the new society (Gbadamosi, 2012; Jo & Ha, 2018). Gbadamosi (2012) found that for Black African women in the United Kingdom, changing to the host nation's style of clothing was an integration response, yet traditional

clothing was retained in cultural safe spaces, such as weddings, to promote cultural heritage. From an educational point of view clothing is a contentious issue especially in the context of a country where the religious clothing choices of minority groups contrast the dominant groups. In secular educational institutions, clothing adaption can cause issues. Bleich (1999) citing Nielsen (1988) discussed how the acculturation approach of integration in the U.K. allowed for compromises to be found for Muslim children to wear headscarves in the colours of the school. This is not to say opponents have not tried to ban the headscarf, but as of 2007 following a number of court cases, schools were allowed to decide the dress code ("The Islamic Veil Across Europe," 2018).

From the French perspective, which approaches acculturation from an assimilation standpoint, Muslim girls were forced to go home for wearing headscarves (CERI, 1987). Later on, a full ban on headscarves in French schools was implemented in 2004, following large public support ("The Islamic Veil Across Europe," 2018). Across Europe there are discussions on the wearing of religious attire, and schools are one place where these discussions face criticism as from the perspective of the dominant groups schools represent the values of the host nation.

Examining the role of clothing from a theoretical standpoint, Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) use symbolic interactionism to conceptualise the connection of dress and identity: "…identities are communicated by dress as it announces social positions of wearer to both wearer and observers within a particular interaction situation" (p. 12). This is significant to the disseration as acculturation research investigates the extent to which an individual maintains their culture and identity (Sam & Berry, 2010), and a change in clothing may signal a shift in behaviour due to exposure with the host nation. Thus, clothing acculturation in the disseration

refers to the extent to which people maintain or adapt their ethnic clothing. The following sections are separated into an analysis of each centre and feature the voices of representatives as well as analysis from the researcher's observations and filed notes.

The Rvwang

There is evidence of clothing maintenance found within the Rvwang learning centre with ethnic symbolism that reflects cultural heritage added to the children's uniform. Pictures of people wearing traditional Rvwang clothing can be found on the walls of the centre. When asked if people still wear clothing like this, one individual responded, "*When Christianity came, the people were more inclined not to wear these kinds of clothes, because they were not seen as Christian and were slightly devilish. Now, we have seen the world of god, and reject those notions.*" Even with the influence of Christianity, aspects of the Rvwang traditional dress have been integrated into a more Western style of clothing with ethnic symbols embroidered on polo shirts which are worn by students, staff, and members of the church (Figure 6.2).

The same symbol and pattern can be found on the pictures hanging on the wall of the centre. To an outsider the symbol would have no connection or point of reference, but for those who are Rvwang it provides a connection to a shared identity (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992) and promotes ethnic and cultural heritage (Gbadamosi, 2012). Wearing polo shirts, trousers, and skirts allow the wearer to integrate more easily while in Malaysia and means they are less visible than if they were to wear the full traditional attire. Attaching the symbol though serves to connect the wearer to their ethnic heritage. Passing these symbols on to the children

in the centre provides a visual representation of their ethnic identity, and a visual cue to identify who is part of the Rvwang group. The importance of ethnic identity stressed in Chapter 5 symbolises an allegiance that the centre wants the children to develop with the Rvwang. In attaching an ethnic symbol to the clothing, the centre is proclaiming allegiance to an identity, but it could also be used to stem the influence of acculturation and to ensure that those wearing the clothing know who they are and to which group they belong.



Figure 6.2: The hat symbol as found thepolo shirt (left), and in a traditional ceremony (right)

The Mon

There are a variety of clothing styles found in the Mon centre with the same person choosing to wear shorts or trousers on one day, then change to ethnic attire like a sarong on the next. The sarong is a style of clothing which is worn in Myanmar with students and adults choosing to adorn it. For the upper part of the body, students wear polo shirts donated by the UNHCR from Monday to Thursday, then change to a polo shirt that contains a logo in the shape of a Sheldrake on Fridays and for cultural events. The use of the Sheldrake is significant in this case as it symbolises both an attachment to an ethnic identity, but also a transnational

attachment to a national movement. The Sheldrake (Figure 6.3, right), is featured on the flag of the main political party in Mon state and can be found in the learning centre on flags and posters that decorate the walls. The state flag also features a gold-coloured bird, but in this instance, it is a hamsa (Figure 6.3). As with the use of the hat symbol on the Rvwang polo shirts (Figure 6.2), attaching the Sheldrake connects wearers to a shared identity (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992), and promotes the ethnic culture to the wearer (Gbadamosi, 2012).

The clothing worn by the children in the Mon centre integrates clothes commonly worn in Malaysia but retains elements of the ethnic background with the sarong being worn, and the Sheldrake attached to polo shirts. The children in the Mon centre spend much of their time inside, so the inclusion of the Sheldrake is a method that further entrenches a child in a Mon identity in much the same way as language and culture (see Chapter 5). The Mon have access to Western-style clothing and clothing that is more commonly found in their homeland, and



Figure 6.3: The Mon State Flag (left), The Mon National Party Flag (right)

for the most part some integrate the two. the disseration only investigates what is worn in Malaysia, so the mixing of the two styles may simply be indicative of life in the Mon state. That being said, the Sheldrake symbolises the Mon and those

wearing it are demonstrating their connection to a Mon identity that serves to maintain an ethnic heritage. From an acculturation standpoint clothing is significant. In much the same way as the Rvwang centre, the Mon centre through clothing is actively managing acculturation by ensuring the children remain attached to the homeland through the symbolism on the clothing that is worn

The Rohingya

The style of dress worn by the children in the Rohingya centre resembles that of a governemt school in Malaysia. As with many Myanmar groups, the sarong is often worn, and there are signs of this with some of the adult members who regularly visit the centre. There are no signs of Myanmar style clothing worn by the children, with the sarong being replaced by trousers or long skirts for the girls, and trousers for the boys. Polo shirts are worn, and these feature the name of the school and charity, which supports the education of the children. Of more significance though are the headpieces. Male students wear the Songkok (Figure 6.4), which is a hat often worn by Muslim men in Malaysia and Indonesia (O'Connell, 2019). In





Figure 6.4: Malaysian Hijab (left) (MalayMail, 2018), Songkok (right) (©CEphoto, Uwe Aranas 2015)

Malaysia specifically, the Songkok is plain black, with the Indonesian version featuring a basic pattern. The boys in the centre, for the most part, wear the Malaysian version, with some wearing a Taqiyah, which is a white, rounded skull cap that is worn by Muslim men in many countries around the world. The hijab worn by the girls is also specific to Malaysia. In Myanmar those who choose to wear a headpiece cover their hair only, while the Malaysian version, which is only found in South-East Asia, is a fitted piece of material with a hole for the face that completely covers the shoulders. The headpieces are an expression of religious identity and devotion that aligns with the importance placed on an Islamic identity as highlighted in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, the use of the Songkok and Malaysian hijab in the learning centre suggests a closeness with the host nation, and in selecting items that are specific to Malaysia it has been found that it may be possible for an individual to integrate more seamlessly (Jo & Ha, 2018). The added benefit of this is that alongside knowledge of the language of the host nation, adapting to clothing specifically worn by other Malaysians means the children become more invisible (see Chapter 4 for a discussion on protection).

Discussion

Sam and Berry (2010) argued that no cultural group is left unaffected by the acculturation process, and dress is one aspect that signals a behaviour shift (Table 6.1). The Sarong or longyi, as it is referred to in Myanmar, is a very visible sign of a style of clothing from the homeland. The longyi was often seen worn by children and adults in the Mon centre, but representatives from the Rvwang and Rohingya centres seemed to favour a more Western style with shorts, t-shirts, skirts, shirts, and trousers. It is difficult to establish if the influence of Western clothes occurred

before arrival in Malaysia. Nevertheless, a rejection of the longyi in Malaysia by some signifies a shift in clothing behaviour. The longyi may not have been viewed as an important aspect of traditional clothing for Rvwang and Rohingya individuals so not wearing it bears little significance. Alternatively, rejecting the longyi may serve as a method by which to integrate into the surroundings, so a person is not easily identifiable. This would support findings by researchers on the power of acculturation to influence dress behaviour (Gbadamosi, 2012; Hoffman, 1982; Jo & Ha, 2018).

	Rvwang	**Mon**	**Rohingya**
School uniform	√	√	√
Ethnic dress for every day (Longyi)	X	√	X
Ethnic dress for celebrations	√	√	X
Ethnic Symbolism	√	√	X
Host nation Apparel	X	X	√
Clothing Acculturation Attitude	Maintenance / Integration	Maintenance / Integration	Integration / Assimilation

Table 6.1: Cross-Cross-comparison from each learning centre

What is noticeably different for the representatives of the Rvwang and Mon communities is that Western garments, such as the polo shirt, are adorned with an ethnic symbol. This allows the wearer to display their ethnic allegiances, promote cultural heritage (Gbadamosi, 2012), and communicate an identity (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). McMillan and Chavis (1986) found that a common symbol is

essential in heterogeneous communities to unite diverse peoples under a common message. This could be expanded to the notions of the imagined community as these ethnic symbols further entrench ideas of social boundaries, as discussed in Chapter 5. The opposite may be so in this case, with the symbol acting as a source of identification to one group and separation from other groups. With representatives from the Rohingya centre, a much bigger shift is noticeable, with the majority of students wearing headpieces that are specific to Malaysia. This demonstrates a level of adaption which is not seen with individuals in the other centres, as items of clothing are selected that allow for integration with the host nation, which also functions to help the wearer blend in and remain less detectable (see Chapter 4 for a discussion in protection).

One of the first symbolic elements to face the acculturation process is clothing, as it is a visible sign of an individual's culture. Therefore, for many individuals and groups who find themselves in a new culture, clothing is one aspect that can change (see Gbadamosi, 2012; Hoffman, 1982; Jo & Ha, 2018). There is compromise on the part of individuals associated with the Rvwang and Mon centres since the level of adaption is minimal. Conversely, garments for children in the Rohingya centre are specific to how Malaysians symbolise Islam through clothing, and choosing these headpieces suggests closer social bonds are favoured with the host nation through integration.

The aim of this section was to look at clothing behaviour in its current form. In the case of representatives from the Rvwang and Mon centre, full traditional clothing was retained for special occasions such as weddings, religious ceremonies, and national events. The very same communities then choose to integrate cultural symbols into clothing that may be common in their surroundings. Rajagopalan and

Heitmeyer (2005) found that there was a correlation between the level of acculturation and level of ethnic clothing involvement, with a high level of involvement suggesting a low level of acculturation. For the Rvwang and Mon individuals there is a level of integration, with cultural elements that have been retained as it attaches to a sense of identity and connects closely with themes identified in Chapter 5. For individuals from the Rohingya centre there is a greater level of integration, and perhaps assimilation with no ethnic elements retained except for items that are more in line with Malaysian symbols of Islamic identification.

Clothing choice has a significant correlation with the previous chapters. The Rvwang and Mon centres encourage the preservation of their ethnic identity as found in Chapter 5, and the use of ethnic symbols on items of clothing aligns with this. Yet, as found in Chapter 4, protection is an issue, and remaining invisible is a concern for the centre. The emphasis on ethnic attributes means the children are more prepared for the homeland than life in Malaysia, and the uniforms that are worn are noticeable enough to be singled out by anyone who may specifically want to target refugees. Conversely, the Rohingya centre's children are able to blend more into the environment. As discussed in Chapter 5, the host nation's language is taught in the centre. This gives the students an edge on the outside should they be stopped by authorities. The added addition of clothing that is commonly worn by Muslims in Malaysia means the children can express their Islamic identity while remaining less distinctive than their Rvwang and Mon counterparts. From the analysis presented, the learning centres address acculturation in part by encouraging those involved to abide by a prescribed vision of how it wants individuals to identify. Thus, affiliation with the ethnic group through clothing equates to affiliation with

the learning centre and vice versa. It is possible to conclude that the centres are addressing clothing acculturation based on the relationship favoured with the host nation, which moves the Rvwang and Mon centres towards a response of maintenance and integration, and the Rohingya centre towards integration and assimilation.

Clothing is a visible representation that indicates how an individual is adapting to a new society. In the previous analysis, there are subtle expressions of ethnic maintenance through the use of symbols and direct expressions of host nation integration with the use of items that are specific to Malaysia. Language, though, plays an even more integral role in the acculturation process as it is more deeply rooted in an individual's sense of identity and belonging. The following analytical section explores language acculturation through a lens of shift and maintenance.

Language Shift & Maintenance

The trajectory of refugees is such that a person may find themselves in a number of new countries and exposed to a wide array of languages as they proceed on their fragmented journey. When the journey becomes fixed in a single location for a number of years, language choice has some salient implications. If a person were to return home, they would need knowledge of their ethnic language; at the same time, some proficiency in the host nation's language could be beneficial for daily communication or employment. This choice does not take into account future trajectories and resettlement to a country where the language is again different, though. These are difficult decisions to make as an adult, even more so when children are taken into consideration. Thus, this section explores how the participants in the disseration have adapted linguistically to life in Malaysia.

Using the voices of individual representatives from each learning centre, linguistic adaption is framed around Language Maintenance and Shift (Fishman, 1964). The concept is pertinent to the disseration as Malaysia is not the final destination on the fragmented journey, and acculturation could influence which languages are used. Language shift, the gradual reduction of L1 and shift to dominant language of the host nation (Clyne, 2003; Gal, 1979), is a process which occurs rapidly among speakers of a minority language (Cho, 2000; Cho, Cho & Tse, 1997) and often impacts the second generation who have been born in or lived for most of their lives in the country. The process of acculturation is such that there are few immigrant groups who are able to maintain their ethnic languages (Filmore, 2000). Looking at individual viewpoints through a lens of language shift and maintenance illustrates how acculturation influences linguistic choices and why certain languages are valued over others. Each centre is looked at independently, after which a discussion section explores relationships and compares the findings.

Voices from the Rvwang Centre

Participants noted a number of concerns and factors that influenced the choices for language maintenance and shift. Language shift is an issue that has had an impact on the Rvwang language both in the homeland and in Malaysia. In Myanmar, only Burmese is permitted for use in schools, and before establishing a Rvwang centre in Malaysia, children were enroled in a centre managed by the Kachin, who are the dominant group in the Rvwang's home state. The use of Jingpow (the language of the Kachin) led one participant to feel frustrated and angered: "*Everybody must speak Jingpow in the Kachin learning centre, it's just like the Burmese government."* Growing up in Myanmar, the participant

experienced language shift by being forced to study in the Burmese language, and now in Malaysia, the participant sees the same shift being forced upon the children. For this participant, the Rvwang learning centre is a way to reverse language shift in those already exposed to other languages and maintain the Rvwang language for the next generation. For those without access to learning centres, it can be difficult to maintain the language (Nesteruk, 2010), which may explain why so many centres have been established around the world that emphasise ethnic language usage (Brown, 2003; Francis et al., 2010; Karanja, 2010; Keevallik, 2010; Kwong, 2011; Phinney et al., 2001b; Yok-Fong & Pellebon, 2012).

Even if the Rvwang centre represents a place to reverse the language shift from Burmese and Jingpow back to Rvwang, language shift still occurs in the centre with a purposeful decision to incorporate English. There are two possible reasons for this. One teacher views the language in terms of educational advancement and prestige, stating, "*The problem is, in our country we are very weak in English, even the teachers are weak. Nowadays the neighbouring countries are developed, so we try to make our education level the same as theirs*." This participant talked about the low level of education available in the homeland, and noted English was a method by which to raise the educational level or perception thereof. From another perspective, the community leader views English as preparation for the future: "*Now many family members and kids migrate. They can attend local school and speak directly to their teacher and friends in English, but not very well.*" When children are resettled, there are often few provisions to help those newly enroled (Symons & Ponzio, 2019). It is possible that the participant believes that some knowledge of English may help to ease the transition into a new school environment.

The impact of language is seen from a different perspective by other individuals connected to the centre. One participant, who is a mother, talked about language in more personal terms: "*Language is important for culture and language, since the parents only speak it."* Language as a tool for family cohesiveness and identity formation is reported by a number of researchers, and the disseration is no exception (Canagarajah, 2008; Filmore, 2000; Man & Sarkar, 2007; Nesteruk, 2010; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2008). While there is a general consensus that Rvwang must be maintained, it is when signs of language shift enter the centre that another mother begins to question language priority, stating, "*English is useful, but it can be learned later. The students need to understand their tribe and history.*" The priority here is one of connection, especially the child's connection to a shared identity with the mother and the family. The importance of this is due to the non-ethnic language being an assimilative force, which Filmore (1991) stated is especially critical in children under the age of 5. The early years are important, and another mother seems to agree with Filmore's (1991) stance: *"Maybe when my kids are 5 years old I will speak in English with them.*" The concern, according to Filmore (1991), is that when children are at such a young age, they have not developed the proficiency in their first language at this point and this leaves them at risk of losing the language if another is introduced at such an early stage.

Individual viewpoints on language maintenance and shift were explored, and while there is agreement on the importance of language maintenance, shift brings reservations. Citing Lambert (1977), Filmore (2000) stated that "… the learning of English is a subtractive process" (p. 203). The larger concern involves family relationships and how parents will lose the opportunity to pass on their values, beliefs, and culture in their own language (Filmore 1991). What is

noteworthy is the gender disparity between views on language shift. Mothers emphasise the maintenance of the ethnic language first, which is in line with Phinney (2001b) who found women are the carriers of the ethnic culture, while male figures want to maintain the ethnic language, but also emphasise learning English for prestige and future resettlement.

What is interesting in this case is that the host nation's language does not enter the conversation. Instead, the focus is on the ethnic language and English. To explain this, Redding (1990) found in a study that the participants had not psychologically left their homeland, and thus there was a greater need to maintain the language. This might be the case for the participants in the disseration. The participants still remain on their fragmented journey, so retaining the language anchors an individual to the homeland while providing a sense of who they are and a connection to a community. The participants, therefore, adapt to uncertainty in Malaysia by reinforcing ethnolinguistic ties and imparting them on their young through the learning centre.

Voices from the Mon Centre

The Mon are the dominant group in their home state and though the Burmese government has effectively banned the language in many government schools, there remains an ethno-nationalist, parallel school system (Lall & South, 2014) tasked in part with the maintenance of the Mon language. Research finds that school has a multifaceted impact on the lives of children (Nieri, 2012; Portes & Hao, 2004; Schneider, Stevenson, & Coleman, 1993; Trickett & Birman, 2005). Nevertheless, there is general consensus that the family plays an important role in the maintenance of ethnic languages (Canagarajah, 2008; Filmore, 1999, 2000;

Fishman, 1964, 2004). One mother cited the language of the centre as a contributing factor to where her child would be enroled, stating, "*They never learn Mon language in another school, and it is important she learns her own language*." One rationale for this is that language is a tool that imparts aspects connected to ethnic identity (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2008), an example of which is provided by one father: "*The Mon language is important, because if we don't teach them, they will not know their history*."

For the mother, the language provides a connection to her (Zhang & Slaughter-Defore, 2008), while for the father language provides a connection to a social identity and ethnic group (Cavallaro, 2005) which is rooted in the Mon history. Lambert (1980) suggested that for an individual not to know their ethnic language is to lose a sense of kinship with that group. The fear of not belonging may be one that these parents carry for their children, which explains why the child is placed into a Mon school and is encouraged to learn the history so they will be socialised into the group.

Unlike other minority groups in Myanmar, the Mon have a long literary history and educational structures in place to ensure the language continues to flourish. Still, there are signs of a shift within the centre with the teaching of Burmese recently introduced. When asked about this, the community leader lamented, "W*e have to use their (Burmese) language, because when we go back to Myanmar, they are holding the power."* The participant begrudgingly acknowledged that repatriation to Myanmar is now more likely than ever, and for students who return knowledge of Mon alone is not sufficient for daily life, as so many places, such as schools, still use Burmese. Nevertheless, the realities of the situation and hopes of the parents may have limited influence. The shift is also

apparent in the children themselves who are susceptible to social pressures (Filmore, 1991) and have a strong desire on their part to belong to a social group (Cummins, 2001). Though the Mon centre is the nexus of the social world, student voices offer a different view of language and its possible shift. One student seemed excited to move on from the Mon centre as a nearby centre, run by a different group, provides instruction in Burmese. At the thought of this the participant said, "*I'm excited to go, because I can speak Burmese very well and there are a lot of people there that I have never talked to*." The perspective from another student, though, illustrates that the aspirations of the students are not unified: "*I want to go to (centre name omitted) because the teachers are good, and they only speak English*." Both students reported that they were fluent in both Mon and Burmese as they had previously spent time in Myanmar before coming to Malaysia. Yet, each had a different educational trajectory in mind. Filmore (2000) discussed the 'subtractive effect' of English, and there is potential here for the students' language to shift as they enter a new learning centre's social world. The first language is often limited to the learning centre, so entrance into a learning centre where a different language is dominant would, according to Filmore (2000), have the potential to erode the ethnic language as it becomes the language most often used for communication and literacy.

There are no provisions for secondary education in the Mon centre, so once an individual reaches 15 years of age, the options are to seek employment, which many do, or to enrol in one of the few centres that offer secondary education. These centres take in students from different backgrounds and use English or Burmese as the main language of instruction. This could potentially have the biggest impact on language shift among students in the Mon centre. Filmore (1991, 2000) stated that

children mostly care about belonging and acceptance, and as they realise their ethnic language is a barrier to this, the potential for language shift and loss is enhanced. Although parents and teachers want the ethnic language to be maintained, there is potential for it to be impacted by entrance into a secondary school, repatriation, or resettlement. Living in the host nation means insulating the Mon language so that it remains the dominant language for as long as possible.

The aim is that a student will reach a suitable level of proficiency in the ethnic language before they move to other educational institutions where the dominant language changes. Maintenance and shift are very apparent in this case. The ethnic language is positioned as the dominant language in the centre, with English and Burmese taught as a second language. The host nation's language does not factor into maintenance or shift as it is considered to be of little benefit, even if the participants will remain in the country for a number of years. The uncertainty of life in Malaysia means there is linguistic separation between the Mon and the host nation, so the focus is placed on languages that will serve the imagined future.

Voices from the Rohingya Centre

Examining language maintenance and shift through the voices of representatives from the Rohingya centre provides a stark contrast to the previous centres. Whereas the representatives from those centres were members of their respective in-groups, the Rohingya centre presents voices from individuals who are both from the in-group (Rohingya students and staff) and the out-group (volunteer Malaysian teachers and staff). Analysing both voices provides an insight into the complexities of language shift and maintenance in a mixed centre and the influence that the presence of individuals from the out-group has over the language process.

A number of studies have recommended that schools play an active role in the maintenance of ethnic languages (Cummins, 2001; Kondo, 1998; Man & Sakar, 2007; Tse, 2001).

The decision to omit the ethnic language from the Rohingya centre places an emphasis on a shift to the language of the host nation. The community leader, who is Rohingya and has lived in Malaysia for a number of years, stated that "... *at home kids will speak in their mother tongue, so for the few hours in this school they should be exposed to English and Malay.*" To get the language exposure necessary, one administrator recalled, "*Rohingya individuals could not teach in other languages, so they taught religious studies instead*." This is where volunteer Malaysian nationals were brought in to teach the classes. Citing Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton (1990), and Hones and Cha (1999), McBrien (2005) stated that teachers facilitate the acculturation process, yet without training and an understanding of the students' culture and language in the classroom, this can lead to complications. Though researched in an Australian context, this is supported by Brown, Miller, and Mitchell (2006), who found that for students with disrupted education literacy and learning, language is challenging and can be frustrating for teachers. One teacher remarked, "… *[A]t the beginning teaching was tough as many of the kids could not speak BM or English.*" Another teacher commented on the difficulty for some students to transition to the new school environment: "*Because of cultural and language differences, it is challenging especially for the kids coming from Rakhine state*." Language shift represented a challenge for both the teachers and the students as neither shared the same language and there was unfamiliarity in regard to cultural aspects.

Even with students who speak different languages and dialects, one teacher noted how Malay was becoming the lingua franca in the centre: "*Kids use Malay and Rohingya language. Some of them understand Rohingya, but some cannot, so they have to use Malay as a means of communication.*" On the notion of shift, Filmore (2000) argued that students begin to lose their ethnic language once they realise what the dominant language of the school's social environment is. In the Rohingya centre, the social world is centred around Malay as it is the language of the teachers and written in the books that students study. Much of the literature speaks to the impact of English on minority languages, with Lambert (1977) suggesting that 'English is a subtractive process.' There is evidence that Malay is also having a similar subtractive effect on the students' ethnic language.

One student who speaks in Rohingya to his/her parents switches and speaks in Malay to his/her siblings. The influence of Malay can be further found with this student as it is one of the languages used to communicate with friends and the only language used for literacy. Another student who speaks Burmese with his/her family also illustrated the influence of Malay as it is again used with friends along with Burmese, and like the previous student Malay is the only language he/she is literate in. Malay is even more dominant than English, with one teacher noting, "*Although the students' Malay and English is limited, I'd say their Malay is better*."

If one of the aims of the centre is to develop a proficiency in the host nation's language, there is evidence that this is happening both on a language and literacy level (see Chapter 5 for an in-depth discussion). The line of contention then lies between language maintenance and shift with participants indicating that the latter is advancing. Filmore (2000) argued that as a child learns the language of the host nation, the first language is under threat. If this is the case, it is the family who

is integral for language maintenance to be successful (Canagarajah, 2008; Filmore, 1999, 2000; Fishman, 1964, 2004) if left to tackle it alone (Hinton, 1999).

Using language maintenance and shift as a lens presents a complex picture in this case. For the participants and learning centre, linguistic adaption is geared towards a shift to the language of the host nation. Ager and Strang (2008) stated that proficiency in the host nation's language is key to the process of integration, and this may be how the participants feel they have to adapt while in the host nation. With futures that are even more uncertain than most and being part of a community who have been in Malaysia for 20 years may mean there is more familiarity with the host nation, and shifting the language is the next aspirational step to greater integration and acceptance.

Discussion

The uncertainly of the future and the length of time spent on the fragmented journey influences linguistic attitudes while in Malaysia, and these differ across centres, groups, and individuals (Table 6.2). This paints a complex picture which is rooted in a person's age, gender, background, time in Malaysia, and most significantly the protracted situations of the participants. The languages spoken by each group are fragile and can be impacted by the language policy of the centre, the influence of the wider society, and the lack of provisions for secondary education in the ethnic language, all of which are overshadowed by the potential to be resettled or even repatriated at any moment. There is a desire for ethnic language maintenance on the part of representatives from the Rvwang and Mon centres. Nevertheless, studies have shown that even when communities have finally settled, interventions by the family and social institutions such as schools can do little to

prevent language shift (Canagarajah, 2008; Hatoss & Sheely, 2009; Jagodic, 2011; Lee, 2002; Zhang & Slaughter-Defore, 2008), and this may be even more challenging for the protracted communities in the disseration. The pressure from language shift gives maintenance a new purpose, which is to anchor individuals and families to a fixed identity as they negotiate different cultures and societies on their fragmented journey. The Rvwang and Mon centres' acculturation attitudes to language indicates that the journey is yet incomplete.

	Rvwang	**Mon**	**Rohingya**
Primary Language of Instruction	Rvwang	Mon	Malay
Second Language	English	English / Burmese	English
Teacher's Linguistic Priority	Maintenance of Ethnic language and Shift to English	Maintenance of Ethnic language and Shift to Burmese and English	Shift to Malay and English
Parents' Linguistic Priority	Mother -Maintenance of Ethnic language	Mother & Father - Maintenance of Ethnic language	——-
Community Leader's Linguistic Priority	Maintenance of Ethnic language and Shift to English	Maintenance of Ethnic language and Shift to Burmese and English	Shift to Malay and English
Students' Linguistic Preference	——-	Burmese English	Malay
Linguistic Acculturation Attitude of Centre	Maintenance of ethnic language, with managed shift to English	Maintenance of ethnic language, with managed shift to Burmese and English	Shift to host nation's language

Table 6.2: Cross-comparative Analysis of Language Shift and Maintenance

Through a lens of shift and maintenance, the move to Malay in the Rohingya centre has had a detrimental effect, replacing all of the ethnic languages spoken by the children. This finding does not take into consideration extenuating factors such as the lack of teachers to conduct classes in the ethnic language and the number of different dialects that would have to be taught. On the one hand, the shift to Malay seems to serve a pragmatic purpose as a lingua franca, whereas, on the other hand, Malay is used as an aspirational tool possibly for integration into Malaysian society. Representatives from the Rohingya centre's future is filled with what Horst and Grabska (2015) deem 'radical uncertainty,' which highlights that as opportunities for resettlement become unattainable, repatriation is equally so due to conflict in the homeland (Wake & Cheung, 2016). The shift to Malay while harming the survival of the ethnic language is done so to secure a future within the host nation. The use of the language symbolises a desire to be granted access into Malaysian society, for there are few other options available for this group.

Language is a complex aspect of the fragmented journey and one that will continue to challenge as trajectories are changed, and people find themselves moving on again to the next location. What is evident is that maintenance and shift are viewed differently by each group, and this is largely impacted by how each group views their future. Horst and Grabska (2015) claimed that "[p]eople navigate uncertainty by maintaining trust in the future and their ability to deal with it, by taking action to prevent negative occurrences or their consequences, and by avoiding potentially negative futures" (p. 12). To a certain extent this is what parents and teachers are attempting to achieve by anticipating how best to prepare for the linguistic future of their young. This section investigated linguistic acculturation and explored how the participants have adapted linguistically to life

in Malaysia. Looking at each case, representatives from the Rvwang and Mon group linguistically separate themselves from the host nation, while representatives from the Rohingya group linguistically integrate. The rationale for these acculturation choices is explored in more depth in the next and final section. Whereas behavioural acculturation was investigated through clothing and language in the previous analysis and discussion, in this final section, group-level acculturation is explored through each learning centre to ascertain which acculturation response has been employed by each centre.

Acculturation Response

The use of the term response in this section is intentional to avoid presupposing the approaches taken are deliberate. The findings from Chapter 4 and 5, including this chapter, skirt a fine line between response and strategy. In Chapter 4 the term strategy was used, as the prevention of risk is a visceral reaction to dangers that are daily. When discussing imagined communities and identity as in Chapter 5 and acculturation in this chapter, these are processes that occur over time and may not be immediately apparent even if they eventually are addressed. Due to this distinction, the following analysis refers to the response the learning centres have taken to acculturation rather than the strategy.

Continuing with Berry's (1997) two-dimensional model, this final section examines each learning centre to identify the preferred acculturation response. Following suggestions by Trickett and Birman (2005) to view acculturation as a multidimensional process, the acculturation response is constructed around findings from this chapter on clothing and language acculturation, in addition to the protective strategies from Chapter 4 and imagined communities from Chapter 5.

Viewing the acculturation response from different perspectives allows for a more well-rounded view of the acculturation process and how the response was constructed. To develop this section further, a second analytical lens is incorporated as a means by which to investigate the rationale for each acculturation response. To achieve this, each centre's preferred values are identified. Based on the work of Smolicz (1981), Core Values are centred around the salient aspect of a group or individual's culture which is deemed the most distinct or crucial for identity. Smolicz (1992) elaborates by saying that

> … there are other aspects of culture which are of such fundamental importance for its continued viability and integrity that they can be regarded as the pivots around which the whole social and identification system of the group is organised. Removal of such pivots, through enforced 'modernization' or assimilation to the dominant group, would result in the entire edifice crumbling to pieces (p. 278).

In much the same way the acculturation responses are constructed, the same data is analysed to identify the core value(s) for each centre. This provides further insight into the acculturation response and may go some way to rationalise its use by each centre.

The Rvwang Centre's Acculturation Response

Table 6.3 illustrates the components that are used to construct the acculturation response, how they are utilised and understood within the centre, and how each relates to Berry's (1997) acculturation model. Marginalisation can be ruled out, as there is evidence that ethnic culture is maintained. Integration and assimilation are also not preferred as there is a rejection of the host nation's

language and culture in favour of ethnic heritage. Separation stands out as the overall response that is favoured by the Rvwang centre. This response speaks to the function of the centre, which is to provide a safe environment, ensure the maintenance and promotion of ethnic identity that includes language, faith, and culture, and prepare for possible resettlement.

		The Rvwang Learning Centre Response	**Acculturation Response**
1	**Protective Strategy**	Concealment Protection from physical threats - crime, authorities Protection from symbolic threats to identity, language and faith	Separation
2	**Imagined Community**	Inward Looking - focus on ethnic attribute maintenance and rejection of outside society	Separation
3	**Clothing Acculturation Attitude**	Integration of ethnic symbols with western style clothing	Integration
4	**Linguistic Acculturation Attitude**	Maintenance of ethnic language and Partial Shift to English	Separation & Future Integration
Learning Centre Acculturation Response		Separation	

Table 6.3 - The Construction of the Rvwang Learning centre's Acculturation Response

The acculturation response of the Rvwang centre is in contrast to the commonly held view that integration is the response that is often chosen by immigrant groups (Berry, 1997; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). This is due to

the protracted nature of the participants connected with the learning centre and the relationship they have with the host nation Malaysia. In line with Hoffstaedter (2014), Malaysia is viewed by the participants in the disseration as a non-place, with their real lives awaiting resettlement. Through a lens of acculturation this is a significant finding and one that greatly influences the acculturation response. Malaysia becomes an extension of the homeland, and the learning centre provides structural support for language, faith, and culture to be maintained and promoted to a new generation until the time for resettlement comes. What is noteworthy is that the time for resettlement can take many years, and in recent times it is less likely to happen. The acculturation response of separation becomes that much more vital, as an individual who has integrated or assimilated into Malaysian society by learning the language and adopting some of the cultural traits would find it more challenging to integrate and be accepted should they return to the homeland.

The possibility for repatriation may explain why the separation response extends to other groups who are themselves also refugees and come from the same country. Core values become pivotal to the construction of Rvwang identity, and its maintenance and promotion are paramount. There are two outcomes envisioned by the learning centre: resettlement or repatriation. English is provided for the former to accommodate the possibility of transmigrating to another country. The latter requires the continuance and transmission of a Rvwang identity, and language is the core value through which this is achieved. Language as a core value has been found by numerous studies on immigrant groups (Conversis, 1990; Smolicz, 1991; Tannenbaum, 2009; Gogonas, 2011; Erdogan, 2012), as it connects a group to an identity (May, 2003; Tannenbaum, 2009). This adherence to language has greatly influenced the acculturation response as it emphasises an ethnolinguistic identity

that sees the centre separating from the host nation and other groups that may impact ethnic language preservation.

The Mon Centre's Acculturation Response

Analysing the components that make up the Mon centre's acculturation response (Table 6.4), marginalisation, integration, and assimilation are not suitable when compared to Berry's (1997) model. Ethnic identity is maintained through the use of language, religion, and culture, which rules out marginalisation. As for integration and assimilation there are few signs that this is occurring, especially in relation to aspects of the host nation. This leaves separation. This response most suits the centre as ethnic attributes are maintained and promoted with a rejection of influences that are not in keeping with Mon identity.

There is a lot of crossover with the Rvwang centre in terms of their acculturation response, and as with the Rvwang centre, the Mon centre's response does not adhere to the view that integration is the preferred option (Berry, 1997; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). Again, this is due to the protracted situation of the representatives from the Mon centre. As in Hoffstaedter's (2014) study, Malaysia is viewed as a non-place—a place to which there is no attachment. Rather than integrate or assimilate into a country where there is no definitive future, the centre attaches belonging to the homeland and aspiration for future resettlement. This explains one aspect of the separation response.

		The Mon Learning Centre Response	**Acculturation Response**
1	**Protective Strategy**	Concealment Protection from physical threats - crime, authorities Protection from symbolic threats to identity, language, and faith	Separation

2	**Imagined Community**	Inward Looking - focus on ethnic attribute maintenance and rejection of outside society	Separation
3	**Clothing Acculturation Attitude**	Integration of ethnic symbols with western-style clothing	Integration
4	**Linguistic Acculturation Attitude**	Maintenance of ethnic language and Partial Shift to Burmese and English	Separation & Future Integration
Learning Centre Acculturation Response		Separation	

Table 6.4 - The Construction of the Mon Learning centre's Acculturation Response

The separation response is not just applied to the host nation but is extended to other communities in the area. Though many of these communities share the same nationality, their core values differ greatly. In Myanmar, the Mon have a more unified and homogenised cultural identity in a state where they are the dominant group, which has led to friction with the Burmese government who seek a unified national identity (Lall & South, 2014). The Mon group in Malaysia began as an endeavour to enhance the Mon cause overseas, and though the political undertones have ceased somewhat, there are remnants of a nationalist agenda that is represented by language. In the homeland, language is a tool to resist the hegemonic powers of the Burmese government. Though far away from its direct influence, language still remains a source of Mon identity and national pride. Language has been used in similar ways by other groups who have faced like forms of oppression and dominance, for example Basque and Catalan groups in Spain (Conversis, 1990) and Arab groups in Israel (Tennanbaum, 2009). The use of language by the Mon, however, most resembles a Polish group in Australia. One study found: "Their

linguistic identity had greater socio-political significance and was supported by a long tradition of political independence, as well as the experience of withstanding a dominant group's pressure" (Smolicz, 1991, p. 127).

Now, in Australia, the group carries memories of times when their identity was threatened in the 19th century. Language then became a symbol of survival, which has been passed on through the generations. Language is the core value in the Mon centre, but it is transnationally rooted in the historical, political, and nationalist aspirations of the Mon in the homeland. The core value has impacted the acculturation response as the allegiance is to values associated with the homeland, and language maintenance is a priority. Separation from the host nation and other groups is an attempt to ensure the language's survival. Language proficiency while serving a greater purpose is also vital on an individual level for those who return to the Mon state. As the language is so intertwined with Mon history, faith, and nationalist aims, an individual who is not proficient in the language may encounter challenges in the Mon homeland. These reasons explain to some extent the importance of language, and thus the separation response of the centre.

The Rohingya Centre's Acculturation Response

The acculturation response employed by the Rohingya centre is juxtaposed to that of the Rvwang and Mon centres. Table 6.5 illustrates how the components drive the centre toward a response of integration and assimilation. Marginalisation can be ruled out, given the attachment with a religious identity. Separation can be eliminated as there is evidence of contact with the host nation and integration with aspects of the host nation's culture. The strategies most in line with the data analysed pointed in the direction of integration with the prospect for future

assimilation. A key driver to this conclusion is the core value of the representatives who use the learning centre and how the centre has chosen to envision these values. Language is often used as the main measurement for acculturation, and the finding that integration is the response employed by the centre is in line with a number of other studies (Berry, 1997; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013).

Studies that have focused on language as a tool for measurement may have missed the core value of the group or individual, though. The Rohingya centre is an interesting example of this as the main language of instruction in the centre is Malay, the language of the host nation. Ethnic language classes are not offered; instead, classes in English and most notably Arabic are offered. The latter, Arabic, speaks to the potential core value that is valued above ethnic language with its connection to an Islamic identity (see discussion in Chapter 5).

		The Rohingya Learning Centre Response	**Acculturation Response**
1	**Protective Strategy**	Visibility, Partnership, Legitimacy	Integration
2	**Imagined Community**	Outward looking / Acceptance of outside social forces and influence	Integration
3	**Clothing Acculturation Attitude**	Integration / Assimilation with Malaysian religious garments	Assimilation
4	**Linguistic Acculturation Attitude**	Shift to the language of the host nation	Assimilation
Learning Centre Acculturation response		Assimilation	

Table 6.5 - The Construction of the Rohingya Learning centre's Acculturation Response

Language is not necessarily the primary core value with the family, clan, and race being central for some groups (Conversis, 1990; Smolicz, 1984). In the case of the disseration, the core value points to religion, which is in line with the value of a number of other groups, including Arab, Irish, Malay, and Polish (Smolicz, 1984). Conversis (1990) found that without a unified ethnic language, other aspects such as religion and race were championed as a means to unite people. Students in the centre reported speaking various languages at home and with friends, which suggests a multi-ethnic background. What unites each person, however, is their faith, and in the absence of a single language, faith is in the central position as a core value that replaces that of the ethnic language. In line with Gogonas (2011), Islam is what provides an identity, and the Rohingya centre incorporates Arabic and Quran classes to further ensure that this Islamic identity is reinforced.

The acculturation response may also have influenced the choice of language in the centre as well. The future trajectory of representatives from the centre is unknown. Returning to Myanmar poses numerous dangers, and the possibility of resettlement to a third country is not guaranteed. As there is shared faith between representatives of the centre and the host nation, the decision to incorporate the host nation's language may be deliberate if Malaysia is viewed as a long-term destination. This ultimately affects the acculturation response employed by the centre. When all these elements are combined, it suggests that the learning centre's response to acculturation is one that favours assimilation into the host society as it moves forward.

Discussion

Using Berry's (1997) two-dimensional model, this section identified acculturation responses that are employed by each centre. It also used Smolicz's (1981) work on core values to further explore the motivation behind each response. Not accounting for legal or social structures, the core values of each centre have influenced acculturation responses. The Rvwang and Mon view language as a core value and use a response of separation to ensure its maintenance and promotion. The use of separation as a preferred response for ethnic language maintenance converges with the findings of Erdogan (2012), who studied a Karen group from Myanmar in Canada, and Celik and Icduygu (2018), who studied a Syrian group in Turkey. For the Rohingya centre, in conjunction with findings by Gogonas (2011), faith emerged as the core value. Due to the centre and host nation sharing the same faith, there are signs that integration is the preferred response of the learning centre.

The responses that have been assigned are not wholly representative of each individual that is associated with each learning centre. In a study of Karen individuals from Myanmar who now live in Canada, Erdogan (2012) found that from the overall sample, there were those with different acculturation strategies within the same group. The study found that people who were married and had children generally favoured separation and maintenance of language, while those who were in school were more likely to favour integration.

There are some similarities to the disseration with parents, teachers, and students offering different viewpoints when it comes to language, and how they view their position in the host nation and what language should be used. What supersedes the views of the individual is the learning centre, and the decisions that are made affect everyone on a group level. Thus, the impact of the learning centre on individual acculturation is significant. Outside the family, school is the dominant

institution (Trickett & Birman, 2005) and its potential to impact the process of acculturation, as well as linguistic acculturation, has been noted by a number of researchers (Filmore, 2000; Phinney, 2001b; Trickett & Birman, 2005; Nieri, 2012; Celik & Icduygu, 2018; Symons & Ponzio, 2019). Hence, all aspects of a child's life in terms of how a child acculturates, the language used, and faith practiced are pre-determined by the learning centres. This demonstrates the influence and power of the learning centres and the impact their responses and strategies have on a child's development and future trajectory in life.

In the literature, there is often conflicting thought on the best ways forward for refugee education, especially for those in protracted positions. On the one hand, some policy on forced migration and refugees calls for long-term solutions such as integration into state schools. Yet, findings from acculturation researchers often highlight the challenges of refugees and immigrants entering government schools, citing alienation, academic achievement, ethnic language and culture loss, and the breakdown of family ties. Clearly there are core values that are vital for immigrant, refugee, and second-generation groups such as language (see Chong, 1998; Phinney et al., 2001b; Brown, 2003; Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010; Karanja, 2010; Keevallik, 2010; Kwong, 2011; Williams, 2012; Yok-Fong & Pellebon, 2012), while for others faith is equally if not more important. The findings from the disseration show that the acculturation response has many facets, with core values representing a key part in deciding which response is implemented. The response that is implemented in the learning centres impacts how individuals and groups adapt to the host nation.

Conclusion

Where national educational systems are used to further the acculturation process into the social boundary and imagined community of the host nation, the learning centres follow suit as they delineate the social boundaries of the ethnic group through the transmission of language, culture, and religion. Thus, the role of the centre is to ensure that children acculturate within this frame. Through clothing, language, and the responses of the learning centres this chapter explored how the participants have adapted to life in Malaysia. In all cases, the participants have been impacted by their time in the country. This aligns with Massey & Mullan (1984) and Sam & Berry (2010), who emphasise the power of acculturation. A significant takeaway for studies that have explored acculturation for immigrants in settler countries (U.S.A., U.K., Australia) is that integration is often the chosen mode of adaption (Berry, 1997; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). Therefore, this dissertation echos the call of Brunner, Hyndman, and Mountz (2014) to conduct more research on settlement outcomes especially looking at areas such as language acquisition.

The Rvwang and Mon centres respond to acculturation by separating, and the Rohingya by assimilating. The rationale for this is linked to the protracted situations of the participants, an attachment to core values that underpin a shared community identity, and aspirations for the future. What is absolutely key and salient for the context of this chapter, as well as the study as a whole, is that the learning centres are integral to the communities they serve. They are an extension of these very communities and assist in managing life in a new country. The centres uphold the values and customs that anchor each individual to the homeland while preparing them for the future. Therefore, the choice of learning centre is an important decision for a parent to make, because the centres have the power to shape

and direct how a child views their own culture and the cultures around them, which influences how they adopt or adapt to the surroundings.

The unknowable futures of the participants in the disseration means their trajectories are in a constant state of flux. Yet, periods of physical fixity in Malaysia that can last many years mean individuals and their families have to adjust to a new environment, which for some adolescents may be the only place they have known. Adapting to life in Malaysia holds a different significance for parents, depending on where they see themselves and their children in the future. For the parents, teachers, and students their lives are filled with uncertainty—uncertainty about the present and what the future holds. Whether the acculturation responses are accepted by all who associate with them is up for debate. What is evident is that the learning centres attempt to provide certainty for the present and the future by offering a stable force as families and their children negotiate the acculturation process.

Chapter 7 – Discussion

Introduction

Before moving on to the conclusion, this penultimate chapter discusses some of the main findings from across the analytical chapters. In carrying out the disseration across three learning centres, the data captured required different analytical lenses to interpret and understand it. The findings that emerged from these analyses unlock areas of enquiry, which have received relatively little attention across the published literature. This chapter is prefaced with a brief summary of the findings from Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Following this, a discussion centres around the main findings from these chapters. Finally, upon completion of this section, the chapter presents a working conceptual model of education for refugees in protected situations.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 investigated the threats that are encountered by refugees on a daily basis with a focus on the role that the learning centres play in mitigating these dangers. The portrayal of refugees and immigrants from media outlets and politicians in countries that host refugees and immigrants is often negative (Esses & Medianu, 2013; Leudar et al., 2008; O'Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007; Van Dijk, 2000; Pugh, 2004). This is in part due to the perceived threat of violence from outsiders and the impact on the culture of the host nation. What is interesting, however, is that these same threats are felt by refugees and immigrants themselves. Incorporating a lens of integrated threat theory of prejudice (ITTP) (Stephan & Stephan, 2013), the disseration identified how realistic and symbolic threats were perceived by the participants and then how each learning centre constructed

strategies for their management and prevention. The findings from this chapter indicated that the Rvwang and Mon centres were reacting to similar realistic and symbolic threats with the former referring to the perceived physical threats from crime, illegal activities, and the authorities, and the latter focusing on the symbolic threat to identity, faith, language, and culture. These perceived threats led both centres to implement a strategy of concealment so they could remain undetected and therefore ensure a higher level of safety. In contrast to this, the main threat posed to the Rohingya centre was realistic in nature. Symbolic threats were not felt as significantly in this case given the shared religious identity between the group and the host nation. This influenced the strategy of the centre and led to a partnership with citizens of the host nation which meant unlike the Rvwang and Mon centres, the Rohingya centre could be visible to the outside world.

The aim of chapter 5 was to examine why language, faith, and preparation for the future featured so predominantly in the data across all three learning centres. The analysis applied a lens of Imagined Communities. Based on the work of Anderson (1983), Norton (2001), and Kanno (2003) imagined communities are a social construction consisting of aspects that connect individuals to others they may not have met within a shared value system. Using this theory, this chapter investigated how each learning centre envisioned an imagined community and the significance of the components that were used for its construction.

Faith was a salient aspect in the imagined community as all the learning centres are non-secular and function as an extension of the religious institutions that are closely associated with each. Language constituted the greatest influence on the imagined community, contributing to the social perspective of each centre. The Rvwang and Mon imagined communities looked inward to preserve their ethnic

languages because it was essential for identity affirmation and membership in a shared ethnic social space. With the incorporation of the host nation's language, the Rohingya centre looked outward as their imagined community was envisioned around possible entrance and acceptance into the host society. Upon casual observation, the learning centres may primarily be viewed as as places for the teaching of math, science, and languages, and that is, of course, one function. On closer inspection, though, and through an imagined community lens, the learning centres are highly complex ethnospheres that develop to meet the specific needs of the representatives they serve. Without an understanding of the learning centres and how their imagined communities are envisioned, viewing them as homogenous when it comes to policy decisions or how educational aid is distributed risks unintended harm to areas that are held in high importance, such as faith and language.

The final analytical chapter, Chapter 6, explored the effect that living in Malaysia had on the participants and how they have adapted to life in an environment different from their homeland. A lens of acculturation using Berry's (1997) two-dimensional model was used to frame the analysis in this chapter. To supplement this, research on clothing identity (Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992), and language shift and maintenance (Fishman, 1964) were used to explore individual behaviour in how clothing and language had been adapted during the acculturation process. Whether clothing had significantly been altered during the participants' time in Malaysia was difficult to ascertain. Still, there were aspects to clothing worn by participants in each centre which provided insight into the impact of acculturation, such as ethnic symbols incorporated into the school uniforms in the Rvwang and Mon centres, and the use of Islamic headpieces that are specific to

Malaysia in the Rohingya centre. These clothing choices depicted what was important to the representatives from each centre and provided signs as to the relationship that is favoured with the host nation. The language also followed a similar theme with clothing, as representatives from the Rvwang and Mon centres chose to maintain their ethnic languages rather than incorporate the language of the host nation. Conversely, the Rohingya centre committed fully to the language of the host nation, marking a complete shift away from any ethnic language maintenance. The final section of chapter 6 used Berry's (1997) model again to identify an acculturation strategy for each learning centre. Still, needing to further explain the significance of each strategy, Smolicz's (1981) Core Values were incorporated to explain the rationale behind each strategy. For the Rvwang and Mon centres, acculturation strategies centred around separation as they sought to retain core values that related to ethnic language and culture. The Rohingya centre, on the other hand, employed a strategy of integration as their core value of faith is shared by the host nation so there is less of an impact on how they identify.

Discussion

This section outlines empirical, theoretical, and conceptual findings from the disseration. Using a thematic approach, the discussion is framed under The Importance of Religion, Language Trajectories, Core Values, Learning Centres as Complex Eco/Social Spheres, and Agency, Structure, Circumvention.

The Importance of Religion

All the learning centres are non-secular, which indicates the salience that religion has for the communities they serve. The rationale for this is due to the close

relationship between religion and identity (Chong, 1998; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Cadge & Ecklund, 2007; Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003; Kim, 2011; Min, 1992; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001), and one core function of the learning centres is the promotion and preservation of a religious message. There are parallels to research on Catholic Schools in the U.K. where "…the Catholic education community identifies a partnership between the school, parents and the local community that comprises both the Catholic community and the wider community as a whole" (Johnson & Castelli, 2000, p. 75). The same relationship can be found with the learning centres, the community, and the religious institutions to which they are so closely attached. The role of the Catholic school is two-fold: firstly, it functions as a location for the coalescence of culture and faith (Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1995). Secondly, in societies such as the U.K. that are secular and plural, the schools are important sites for religious preservation in a time where fewer people identify as Catholic (Casson, 2011).

The learning centres mimic the function of Catholic schools by establishing a religious culture and ensuring its preservation. This further explains the data from Table 2.1 in Chapter 2 that illustrated how only 19% of the 122 learning centres registered with the UNHCR in Malaysia contained individuals of different religious backgrounds. Constructing a mono-religious environment in the learning centres seems to be a method used to ensure faith is retained. The findings from this disseration show that religion is just as important as language, if not more so in the case of the Rohingya. This contributes to knowledge by highlighting the role of religion for refugee communities and calls for it to be elevated alongside areas that feature more prominently in the literature, such as protection and access to education.

Language Trajectories

The empirical findings in the disseration demonstrate the salience of language through successive analytical chapters. What is notable is how language is conceptualised so that its usage in the learning centres addresses the specific needs of the communities they serve. The Rvwang and Mon centres are vessels through which the ethnic language of each community is preserved and promoted. This is a replication of the findings from numerous studies conducted in regions around the world with groups that value and protect their ethnic language when faced with the prospect of it shifting to match that of the nation where they reside (Brown, 2003; Chong, 1998; Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Francis et al., 2010; Karanja, 2010; Keevallik, 2010; Kwong, 2011; Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Phinney et al., 2000; Williams, 2012; Yok-Fong & Pellebon, 2012). Language has been studied from a number of perspectives with rationales for its maintenance contributed to numerous factors. Table 7.1 outlines the rationales that some researchers have reported and includes a mix of groups that are in protracted situations and groups that have resettled.

	Finding	**Author**	**Rvwang Language Maintenance**	**Mon Language Maintenance**
1	Connection to the homeland	(Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010)	√	√
2	Resistance to assimilation	(Nagel & Staeheli, 2005)	√	√
3	Promotion of a sense of pride	(Yok-Fong & Pellebon, 2012)	√	√
4	Preservation of culture	(Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Keevallik, 2010)	√	√

5	Formation for adolescent identity	(Phinney et al., 2000; Wong-Filmore, 2000; Man & Sarkar, 2007; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2008; Canagarajah, 2008; Nesteruk, 2010)	√	√
6	Utilisation as identity marker	(Nagel & Staeheli, 2005; Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010)	√	√
7	Reinforcement of ethnic identity	(Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2008)	√	√
8	Family cohesiveness	(Wong-Filmore, 2000; Man & Sarkar, 2007; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2008; Canagarajah, 2008; Nesteruk, 2010)	√	√

Table 7.1: Rationale for ethnic language maintenance

As well as reinforcing the findings from Table 7.1, the case of the Rvwang centre adds to the literature by showing that language was used as a method to unify representatives for the purpose of separating from a dominant group. Power relationships between the larger Kachin group and subordinate Rvwang group persisted transnationally from Myanmar to Malaysia. The power and influence exerted by the Kachin group meant Rvwang children were enroled in the centre, inculcating them in Kachin culture and language. With similarities in faith between the two groups, language remained a significant factor in how representatives from each group identified. Many of the Rvwang children were under the age of 7 years, so the risk was a shift to the Kachin language and loss of the Rvwang language. In the case of the Rvwang, language provides a means through which to exert agency and gain power in order to be unshackled from the influence of a more dominant group that threatened the survival of their culture through language assimilation. In another interpretation of language maintenance, the Mon centre also presents an

interesting addition to the literature. The centre in Malaysia continues an ethno-nationalist cause where the language was used in the homeland to resist the hegemony of a Burmese national identity that is enforced in schools by the ruling military junta. As with the Rvwang case, language was not simply about maintenance, but resisting dominant forces. The creation of the Mon centre in Malaysia was a method by which to ensure the Mon language retains a presence outside of the homeland. This was so if a Mon individual who was born overseas returned to Myanmar, they would have the Mon language built into how they identify. This furthers the political and nationalist cause of the Mon and ensures that the language is preserved for future generations.

The case of the Rohingya centre presents a counterbalance to the other centres, as language has shifted to match that of the host nation, thus rejecting maintenance of the ethnic language. For refugees in protracted situations such as the Rohingya, there is much less in the literature on the impact that acculturation has on language. In this instance, shifting to the host nation's language serves a pragmatic solution and long-term aspiration. The construction of an identity that centres around faith rather than language means those who identify as Muslim from Myanmar are accepted. The number of ethnic languages spoken by the children and the fact that some children have parents from two different cultures created multi-lingual speakers with no affiliation to one distinct language. In addition to this, being unable to find teachers who could provide instruction in the Rohingya language left the centre to look for Malaysians to work as teachers to conduct classes. This automatically raised the host nation's language to a primary position and thus rendered it the lingua franca to unite multi-lingual speakers under a

common language. To the detriment of the ethnic language, the language of the host nation thrives.

Yet, its usage may play a larger role in the future for representatives of the Rohingya centre in Malaysia adapting Malay, and recent reports by the government suggest that there is potential for refugee groups to be granted access to health care and education in Malaysia. Proficiency in the language would certainly assist in the integration process should that occur. What this finding does reveal is that the protracted position of this group has had a significant impact on language during the time spent in Malaysia, and the learning centre has facilitated this process. This is not only a result of language acculturation, as the continuing dangers of returning home leaves individuals with few choices than to develop a life in Malaysia, and language plays a vital role in this process.

Much of the scholarly research on language maintenance, shift, and loss are rooted in places of settlement, such as North America, Europe, and Australia. But language shift and loss for refugees in protracted situations has yet to be studied and written about in great depth. This disseration provides the first comprehensive look at language and how it is utilised by three different groups through learning centres. Aside from evidence of language maintenance that is aligned with many existing studies, a significant contribution is that the Rvwang and Mon use language as a tool to exert a separate ethnic identity in the face of dominance from a more powerful group. For the Rohingya centre, shifting away from the ethnic language means the opportunity to access education in addition to preparing for entrance into the mainstream Malaysian society. The learning centres take a principal role in the process and illustrate just how much influence they can exert.

Core Values

A significant finding in this disseration is that core values underpin many of the actions and responses that are employed by the learning centres. The influence of core values is deeply rooted in each centre and is paramount to the foundations of the community they serve, so much so that parents choose to enrol their children in centres that specifically align with their own personal core values. Parents chose the Rvwang and Mon centres specifically with ethnic language in mind, and in much the same way, children attended the Rohingya centre based on the faith that was practiced. This is not to say that each centre only has one core value. On the contrary, there are a number of salient factors that can be considered core values. Language and faith merely represent the most significant and influential values. Smolicz et al. (2001) concluded that the families in their study used social structures to retain core values, with examples of family and learning centres provided. The previous study did not research learning centres specifically, so the findings in this disseration provide further evidence of the role that learning centres play in ensuring these values are maintained. The influence of the core values cannot be understated (Figure 7.1). Their influence is apparent in the protection from symbolic threats in the Rvwang and Mon centres and forms a key role in the construction of how all the centres envision their imagined community. The core values even influence how adolescents in the learning centres adjust to the host nation during the process of acculturation. There is literature on the core values of groups (Conversis, 1990; Smolicz, 1991; Tannenbaum, 2009; Gogonas, 2011); this disseration, though, presents the first empirical findings, to the knowledge of the researcher, of the role the learning centre plays in facilitating core values.

In the Malaysian context, the findings from this disseration may explain the data on learning centres in Malaysia in Chapter 2, Table 2.1, which reported that 48% of 124 learning centres served a single group. Of the total number, only 22% serve multiple nationalities, and out of 124 centres only 19% have a student body that is religiously diverse. This disseration was limited to a multi-sited ethnography conducted on three sites, yet the heterogeneity in terms of the ethnic, linguistic, and religious composition of each learning centre means the findings could be applicable to other sites. What the data from Table 2.1 and this disseration demonstrates is that core values are inextricably connected to the individual and group and are vital for identity construction.

For refugees in protracted situations or those who perceive their core values are under threat, the desire to retract from society to ensure these values are upheld manifests in the separation of the individual or group and construction of a learning centre. Yet, if there is alignment in the core values, the possibility for integration is more likely. The implication is that core values may then indicate, to a certain extent, the relationship the individual or group may have with the surrounding society. Core values do not exist in a vacuum—they bleed into other aspects of life, and an understanding of these values may assist policymakers on a national level and community organisations on a local level to engage with groups that from the outside seem disconnected. Investigating the core values of learning centres, complementary schools, and home schooling may allow researchers and policymakers to better understand why some communities feel the need to detract from society and forge educational pathways that more accurately reflect their values rather than the values of the nation. This finding is significant and may find

usage in studies on acculturation, identity, and protection for refugee and immigrant groups.

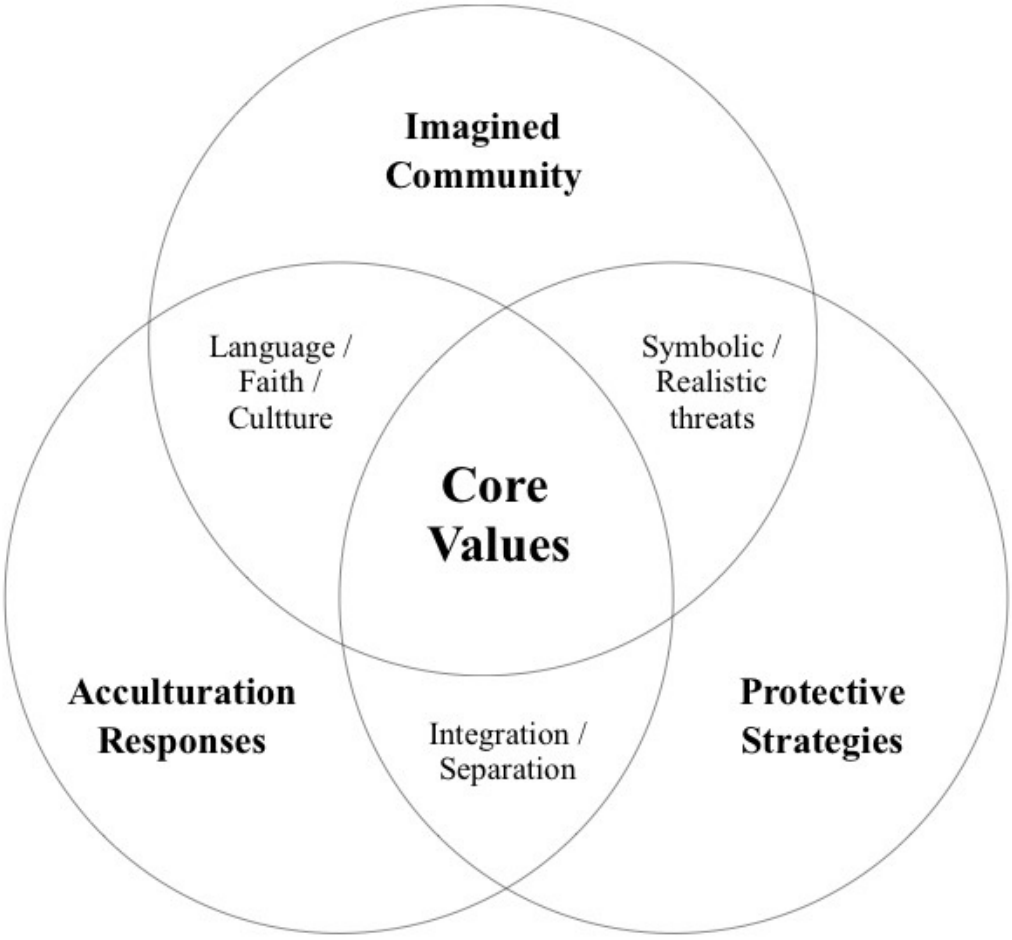

Figure 7.1: Intersectionality of Core Values

Learning Centres as Complex Ethno/Social Spheres

The centres function as the social nexus for the representatives that utilise them. The illegal immigrant status of the participants means some of the centres are contained within hidden enclaves that ensure the safety of those within by concealing the location. The freedom that would otherwise be expressed out in the open is confined to the centres. The learning centres evolve to become dynamic, complex ethnospheres that are the nexus of the community. Places can influence the social lives of the individuals who use them (Ehrkamp, 2005; Werlen, 1993),

and this is the case with the learning centres. Far from being subject-orientated places of study, the centres transcend the traditional idea of school to incorporate elements that are specific to the communities they serve. This individuality allows areas such as faith, language, culture, identity, and history to be seamlessly integrated into the school day alongside the study of subjects which often take centre stage in traditional notions of school. Schools have been labelled the dominant institution outside of the family (Schneider, Stevenson, & Coleman, 1993).

For the centres in this disseration, their dominance is more profound as parents and guardians often work long hours, or work far away, which means the centres become the de facto guardian with the responsibility to raise children in an environment keeping with the parents' culture, values, and beliefs. The learning centres mandate does not stop with the provision of education, as they have to provide pastoral care for students that go beyond that of a regular school. Many of the students in this disseration board or spend the best part of the day in the centres, which means their social world is created through interpersonal contact with the people they encounter. Living in a new culture and the uncertainty surrounding their protracted position means being surrounded by people that share the same culture may create a positive and reassuring environment for refugee children to feel safe. Research points to the importance of peers for developing relationships (Ager & Strang, 2008), especially when there is familiarity in cultural or linguistic background (Brown et al., 2006; Cassity & Gow, 2005; De Heer et al., 2016). The centres facilitate an ethnosphere that encapsulates the specific culture of the community and surrounds children in cultural, linguistic, and religious familiarity. There is no doubt that state and large-scale educational systems function in a similar

way, but the learning centres are far more intimate and personalised to match the specific needs of the community. This finding is important as it demonstrates vividly the complex social worlds that are forged within the learning centres, which until now were not viewed in such a way.

Agency, Structure, Circumvention

The next major finding is that the learning centres are not static or fixed—they are fluid, temporal, and in many ways embody the protracted situation of the representatives they serve. Though each centre has a core value and an aspirational future trajectory for the children, there still remains a high degree of uncertainty. In managing uncertainty, there is a level of self-sufficiency and autonomy that has developed in order to deal with issues and changes as they present themselves. It is this independence that allows each centre to pursue a specific linguistic, cultural, or religious agenda. To be able to exert this level of agency, each centre has had to develop responses or protective strategies to ensure core values can be maintained and the safety of those inside assured.

This also means that the centres must also look inwards to the local community for funding as external funds provided by the UNHCR has ceased. Nevertheless, there are signs of transnational cooperation with the Rvwang and Mon centres providing access to learning materials in the ethnic language from overseas groups. The Rvwang centre received materials from the Rvwang diaspora in Thailand, and the Mon received some materials from the home state in Myanmar. Faced with a number of uncertainties that relate to the future in terms of the potential for resettlement, each day presents numerous challenges from unforeseen forces. The potential for refugee communities to overcome barriers and obstacles

has been discussed in the literature (Palmgren, 2013). What is apparent from this disseration are the strategies employed by each centre, and the local and transnational social networks that are developed to ensure that a level of agency can be maintained so that representatives from each centre are able to exert some level of control.

Having attained a level of agency, each centre is tested on a regular basis. This is where the fragility of each centre becomes apparent. There are a number of structures that exert almost constant pressure, and persistently challenge each centre's continued existence or the values which are held and protected. Each centre is faced with a multitude of structures, summarised in Chapter 5 as internal, legal, and transnational. The extent to which these structures have curtailed agency can be demonstrated by one of the centres in this disseration: the Mon centre had to begin language classes in Burmese in 2018. This contravened the core value of the centre, which was to promote the ethnic language, but legal and transnational forces made the decision, though unpalatable, inevitable.

Increasingly, the prospect of resettlement is even more unattainable, and the position of refugees in Malaysia is fraught with uncertainty. The only option available to representatives of the Mon centre, and one which is now being reluctantly entertained, is repatriation. Transnational structures are present here as the subordinate position of the Mon language in the homeland means Burmese is necessary for employment and for education, so Burmese was included in the school curriculum. Another example is provided by the Rohingya centre which has also succumbed to legal and transnational structures. Similarly with the Mon, resettlement is becoming less likely and, more tellingly for the Rohingya, repatriation is inconceivable given the dangers and their status as non-citizens in

their homeland. Perhaps it is this last point that truly signifies the position of the Rohingya and the choices made by the learning centre. Though representatives from the Rvwang and Mon centres face uncertainties and danger in the homeland, the Rohingya have no homeland. Thus, the Rvwang and Mon centres are allowed to retain a sense of agency as repatriation is an option should resettlement or life in Malaysia not materialise. The Rohingya, while able to exert a level of agency not found in the homeland in regard to how they worship, are left with no option but to seek a life in Malaysia. Learning the language and culture is the first part of being accepted into the host society.

Tension exists between the level of agency each centre exerts and the limit to which this is possible under the constraints of structures that influence what occurs inside. By attempting to deflect these structures, social, legal, transnational, or otherwise, the centres incorporate a number of strategies to mitigate their effects. Nevertheless, as autonomous and independent ethnospheres they are susceptible to structures that are more powerful and, ultimately, over time may influence the inner workings of the centres either in terms of language choice as in the Mon centre, or acculturation response as in the Rohingya centre. A key discovery in this dissertation is that the power to exert a certain amount of agency is a salient factor for the representatives from each community who want some control over the education of the younger generation. This is evidenced in the notion that nationality is not a unifying factor for three communities that originate from the same country yet operate independently of each other. The need for each centre to retain a certain level of agency is a significant finding from this disseration as it demonstrates a clear desire not to lose aspects connected to ethnic identity.

Before concluding this section, it is worth mentioning the influence of structure within each community. The learning centres are part of a larger community structure that follows a set hierarchy. There is a community leader, who is male in all instances, and it is he who is the decision-maker. The leadership roles seem to be derived from the homeland, with the Rvwang employing an elder council system that comprises a number of older men who provide advice on various matters. From what the researcher was able to discover, the Rvwang and Mon are highly structured with groups organised within the community comprised of the women's, youth, and religious groups. For the Rohingya, the organisational structure is shared between a Rohingya community leader and Malaysian nationals, although just how much influence the leaders have is unknown. If a person were to disagree with the way a learning centre is managed, the alternative options are limited. There was general consensus on the main issues of language, faith, and culture; however, that is not to say there are some underlying issues that were not brought to light during the fieldwork.

The capacity for all participants in this disseration to act independently is hampered by their position in Malaysia as illegal immigrants where they are void of rights and a voice. It is only through group-level, social organisation that a level of agency can be attained, and through social institutions like the learning centres, parents and teachers are able to make agentic choices such as how the child should be raised and in what environment. This is the crux as to why agency is vital for each centre, and explains why even against insurmountable structures each learning centre finds methods for their circumvention. The significance attributed to this finding may help schools in the U.K. to understand why in recent months there have

been protests by Muslim parents against the teaching of LGBTQ+ inclusive content, which parents feel contravene their Islamic heritage (Ferguson, 2019).

Parents want their values instilled in their children. Yet, as schooling in the U.K. is secular, it might be difficult for some communities to see how education and faith can be mutually exclusive. The possible outcome is that if parents feel they have no agency over education, they may seek other alternative means of educating their children away from the state system. This is exactly what the participants in this disseration have achieved with the learning centres. To summarise, though the learning centres are fluid and subject to influence from the pressure of structures, the capacity to retain a level of agency is such that strategies are developed and employed to ensure the core values of the community are preserved.

Towards a Conceptualisation of Education for Refugees in Protracted Situations

Using the analysis and findings from this disseration, a conceptualisation of refugee education begins to emerge. The outline presented here builds on ideas suggested by Dryden-Peterson (2017) who argued that "[t]he trajectories of refugees do not fit neatly into the established policy categories of return, local integration, and resettlement. Instead, they are non-linear and complex permutations of migration, exile, and consistently re-imagined futures" (p. 21). As the findings in this disseration attest, the participants have spent many years in Malaysia in between policy categories. During these successive years, representatives from three communities have established learning centres as a way to educate younger generations in the values of the community, but also as a way

to prepare the young for an uncertain future. It is where refugee education has to be reconceptualised, as Dryden-Peterson (2017) suggested, "Understanding that conflict and displacement are not temporary requires a rethinking of refugee education as a long-term endeavour, connected not only to the idea of return but to the ongoing nature of exile" (p. 15).

The aim of this section is to begin to conceptualise the role of education as it pertains to a process of ongoing exile. What is presented here does not encapsulate the entirety of the refugee educational experience. Rather, it provides areas for further research to be conducted in an area that has received relatively little attention, as focus is often on post-settlement.

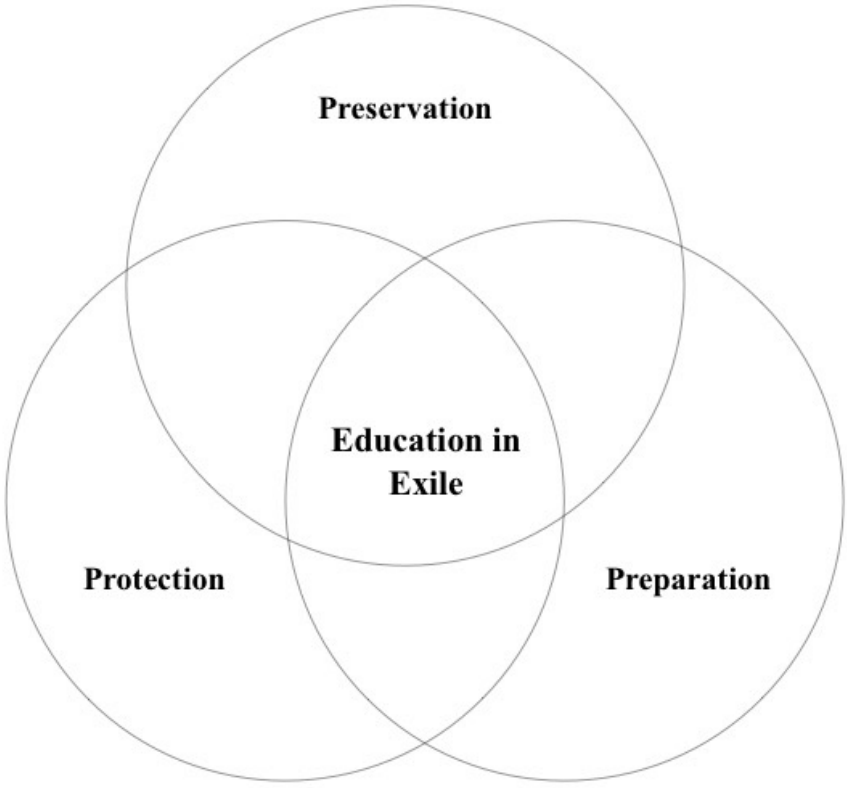

Figure 7.2: The Three Ps of Education in Exile

Contributing to this pre-settlement education field and building on Dryden-Peterson's (2016) three themes of language barriers, teacher-centered pedagogy, and discrimination in school settings, this disseration includes preservation, protection, and preparation. Figure 7.2 presents the three main themes that were extrapolated from this disseration. The first, preservation, refers to the core value that is being upheld by the community through the learning centre and education that is offered. Preservation encompasses a number of areas such as language, faith, and culture. There may also be a combination of areas that are preserved such as language and faith, each with equal importance. The next theme is protection, which addresses threats that can be either symbolic or realistic in nature. The centre represents a physical barrier to protect those on the inside from perceived threats on the outside, and in doing so provides peace of mind for parents that their children will be safe while away at work. Finally, preparation refers to the nature of refugees in protracted situations and how the future is envisioned. Education can be used to prepare for the future with the incorporation of English classes that ready students for school in the next country. Preparation can also be used to ready those to return to their home countries by providing language classes that will allow children to integrate back into a country they may not have visited or where they have spent little time.

The conceptualisation presented in Figure 7.2 builds on the themes suggested by Dryden-Peterson (2016) to further the understanding and aim to conceptualise education for those who spend years in protracted situations. This area of research has received relatively little attention, and the findings from this disseration begin the process of building a foundation for this area of study to be developed further.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter provided an overview of the previous analytical work and brought together the central findings into a thematic discussion. Finally, a working conceptualisation was presented that builds on the work of Dryden-Peterson (2016) and expanded an understanding of what constitutes education for refugees in protracted situations. The next and final chapter addresses the research questions that have guided this disseration and offers implications for research into refugee education, as well as the wider educational field in other contexts.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

Introduction

The research into refugee education began with a simple aim to provide a better understanding of how the learning centres served their communities. The data collected through ethnographic fieldwork offered a detailed look into the function of the centres and demonstrated that while comparisons can be made to state schooling systems, the process by which education is created is highly personalised to meet the needs of each community. The lives of the participants in this disseration are highly complex as they are stretched across transnational and temporal boundaries. The education that is offered reflects this as it attempts to create a sense of normalcy for the students who are enroled. The research questions used to study refugee education do not address the entirety of the educational experience, but they attempt to begin a process of exploring and identifying how the learning centres function for refugees in protracted situations. This final chapter begins by answering the research questions individually. Following this, a discussion of the implications for the study addresses how the findings from this disseration can be applied to refugee education and the wider educational field. Finally, this section concludes with a segment on the limitations of this disseration and areas for future research to explore.

Research Question

The general research question (RQ) developed for this disseration asked "What is the role of learning centres for refugee communities in Malaysia?" and four sub-questions sought to investigate the main question in more depth. Before addressing the main RQ, each sub-question will be answered individually.

Sub-question 1

"What needs and aspirations have refugee communities responded to in establishing and maintaining learning centres?"

The needs and aspirations of the refugee communities can be divided into the immediate and the long-term. The former, which resembles frameworks for the provision of education soon after conflict, seeks to establish safe places where a child is free from physical and emotional harm. For refugee parents, the immediate concern relates to money—money to pay for accommodation and food and money to pay the agent who brought them over the border. Accompanied by a child in tow creates innumerable threats, from common criminals and gangs to authorities who view refugees as illegal immigrants. The learning centres essentially become extensions of the family whereby they take on the job of ensuring that each child is safe from harm while parents and guardians are away at work. The centres attempt to provide a stable environment so that children may find a sense of normalcy among people who speak the same language and share the same cultural traits.

The long-term needs are more pertinent to the protracted position of the participants in this disseration. With the potential to remain on the fragmented journey for many years, and the host nation, Malaysia, contributing no significant value to identity (Hoffstaedter, 2014), the concern is that individuals could enter into a sense of what Durkheim (2005) termed anomie or normlessness. Being plunged into Malaysia places individuals in a society that starkly contrasts their homeland—a place whose values, beliefs, languages, food, and surroundings present challenges as they differ significantly from the homeland. To curb any sense

of anomie, the learning centres create ethnospheres where the values, norms, language, faith, and culture of the community can be preserved and passed on to the next generation.

Without this outlet for identity construction, some adult participants felt that adolescents would be lost with no understanding of the self or social group to which their parents belong. The learning centres could, on the one hand, be for the preservation of cultural traits but on the other hand, attempt to intervene anomie by constructing imagined communities that inculcate children into the norms, values, and culture of the community while on the fragmented journey. They may have the potential to anchor the child to a sense of belonging that is rooted in the culture, language, and religion of the community.

The final long-term need and aspiration refers to preparations that are made for the future. The previous section touched on identity, and this is something that is important to be established early on, so the child understands their cultural heritage. This identity, once fixed, can hopefully remain throughout the fragmented journey and to a country of resettlement. Resettlement is a goal for participants in all the centres, even if the chances seem remote. Provisions are made for the teaching of English which is seen as vital should the application for resettlement be successful. The learning centres fuel this aspiration for resettlement by providing English classes, and teachers are sought both from inside the community and from volunteers who can assist in providing these classes to the students. Resettlement, though, seems unlikely in the current climate, so the learning centres are responding to the need for children to be repatriated or even for them to settle in Malaysia. The uncertainty faced by refugees means that the present or future is not known. The needs for the refugee communities in this disseration are for the safety of the

children to be ensured on a daily basis. Then, during the children's protracted stay in Malaysia, the aspiration is for each child to be inculcated into the culture of the parent which includes knowledge of the language, culture and faith of the homeland. The learning centres are indispensable in this process, and as this disseration has shown, communities will go to great lengths to ensure that their core values are preserved and promoted. This point is vital for policymakers and aid providers that create schooling and educational to consider. While access to school and education is important, it needs to be provided with the understanding that communites and parents have aspirations that go beyond subject-based learning and touch on areas such as language and faith maintenance and promotion that are specific to each individual and group.

Sub-question 2

"How do the learning centres approach the meeting of these needs and aspirations?"

Through the learning centres, representatives attempt to meet the needs and aspirations of the communities they serve. There are five key areas to discuss, which include safety, culture, faith, language, and preparation for the future. Safety is a daily concern for all individuals, so to ensure this can be delivered, the Rvwang and Mon centres conceal their locations. The Rohingya centre takes a different approach by forming a partnership with a local Malaysian NGO. This relationship, combined with the presence of Malaysians working as teachers and administrators, provides a layer of protection for the centre. Culture is met in each centre by providing time for cultural events, holidays, and celebrations that are specific to each community. For example, students from the Mon centre learn traditional dance and songs and

take part in the annual Mon Day celebration where Mon individuals from all over Malaysia meet to celebrate their heritage. Language needs depend on each centres' core values and imagined community.

The Rvwang and Mon centres value their ethnic language, so to ensure this is preserved and promoted, ethnic teachers from the community are employed who can teach in the ethnic language. In the case of the Rohingya centre, representatives seek closer ties with the host nation, so Malaysian nationals teach in the centre using the language of the host nation. The final function of the centres is to prepare the children for the prospect of future resettlement, preferably to an English-speaking country. Making sure the students have some proficiency in English means bringing in people from the community who can speak English, or, as many do, seek volunteers who are often Malaysian and speak English as a second language. Meeting the needs and aspirations of the communities means the creation of a symbiotic relationship between the learning centres and the communities themselves, for one would not survive without the other. The learning centres are not funded by a state budget, and teachers are not automatically provided, so the representatives from each learning centre must use social capital developed through ethnic solidarity to ensure the centres can continue.

Sub-question 3

"What challenges do the displaced communities face in using the learning centres to meet their needs and aspirations?"

The challenges faced by the learning centres are innumerable; however, they can be best understood through three themes: financial, acculturation, and uncertainty. The first, financial, is all-encompassing and presents a daily challenge

to all the centres whose financial models are based on school fees and donations. Funding from the UNHCR was ended in 2018, which provided some additional allowance for teachers. The centres have always had to be predominantly self-sufficient financially, but the loss of funding means payment for teachers dropped significantly, which leaves the centres to make up the shortfall. The impact is felt by the Rvwang and Mon centres who rely on individuals from the community to teach and impart the core values of language and culture. With a dramatically reduced salary, the challenge is to attract and retain people who would otherwise be able to make far more money in another mode of employment. The Rohingya centre faces similar problems as it relies mostly on Malaysian nationals who volunteer their time to teach, so their time is limited to their availability.

The next financial challenge is the provision of learning materials. At present, textbooks that are used in each centre have been donated and often there are not enough for each student, which means photocopies have to be made. Aside from the need for physical books is the challenge of acquiring books in the native language of each community. For the most part the books available in the centres are written in either English or Malay and are left over from old versions of the Malaysian national curriculum. To a certain extent this suits the centres that want some English education, and the Rohingya centre that teaches in the Malay language.

For the Rvwang and Mon centres, providing books in the native language means either creating them in-house or relying on transnational connections where learning materials are shared. Textbooks are a powerful assimilative force as they focus on the host nation's norms, values, culture, and language, and their usage may impede efforts made by some centres to retain an ethnic environment. The challenge

for the centres and the teachers is to decide between having no books to teach, or using the books of the host nation and then finding a balance that does not impact negatively on the core values upheld by each centre. The best way to assist the centres with materials is to identify through dialogue which specific materials are required and, more importantly, in which language. If the language is unavailable the centre could be helped to create transnational networks or provided access to the internet where online materials in the desired language may be found.

The next challenge faced by the centres are structural and come in the form of acculturation, which is not only exerted by the host nation but by the textbooks used in class and the teachers who conduct the lessons. Ensuring the continuance of the community's core values is imperative, albeit related to language, culture, religion, or all of the above. The challenge, though, is balancing core value maintenance while incorporating elements that may complement or threaten these values such as textbooks and the presence of non-ethnic volunteers. The Rvwang and Mon centres strive to create ethnospheres that reduce the influence of outside acculturative forces from the host nation and micro-societies that consist of other refugee groups. Yet, the centres still rely on donated books previously used by school children of the host nation and volunteers from outside the community to provide language classes, so the ethnospheres constructed by each centre are not impermeable. The only option available to the centres, in this case, is to enrol children at an age young enough where the culture of the community can be imparted before there is too much interference from outside influences.

The last theme, uncertainty, underscores all challenges present and future. The representatives and learning centres do not exist in a world of fixity as their existence is in a constant state of flux. Without warning, the centre could be closed

down by the authorities or the government could rescind any fragile agreements that have been made with the UNHCR, thus rendering refugees at even more risk. Uncertainty does not only refer to the present as the future leaves even more unanswered questions. The learning centres attempt to manage the challenges of uncertainty by providing a place where children can find stability and normalcy. There are no certainties for the future, though, so the challenge faced by each centre is how children are prepared for the unknown. The challenge that each centre is confronted with on a daily basis is how it manages uncertainty so that the effects are not passed on to the children.

Sub-question 4

"How have the learning centres evolved as a result of the challenges and changing needs and aspirations?"

Each centre has evolved differently depending on their core values, the imagined community which is envisioned, the relationship sought with the host nation, and how the future is perceived. The learning centres represent an avenue in which to free their representatives from a hegemony that was prevalent in the homeland and replicated transnationally in Malaysia. The learning centres initially evolved as a way for individuals who shared common linguistic, cultural, or religious traits to provide a safe place for children and to pass on cultural values. Prior to the establishment of each centre, children attended learning centres that were managed by other communities whose cultural attributes were markedly different. Enroling children in these centres was reminiscent of the situation in the homeland, where schools are forced to inculcate all ethnic groups into a single Burmese identity. In fleeing hegemonic rule in the homeland, in Malaysia parents

were essentially placing their children in the same predicament. Wanting to ensure that children were raised to understand the same core values as their parents, the learning centres in this dissertation evolved to meet these needs.

The underlying role of each centre is to ensure the core values are maintained, and this was the main driver of establishing the centres in the beginning. Still, challenges have influenced how the centres have evolved and moved forward. The Rvwang and Mon centres still retain a strong commitment to the ethnic identity of their representatives. This is also the case of the Rohingya centre, which emphasises a religious identity. What differentiates the Rohingya centre from the others is that a closer relationship is sought with the host nation. Whereas Rohingya students were initially enroled in madrasa schools that focused primarily on the teachings of Islam, representatives from the Rohingya centre have incorporated madrasa style learning with classes that serve to bridge the divide between the Rohingya and the host nation. This evolution is based largely on survival and necessity. Repatriation to the homeland is unlikely, and a dangerous prospect given the continued persecution of Muslim minorities in Myanmar. Resettlement abroad is also a remote possibility. The most attainable solution is the inclusion of the Rohingya into Malaysian society, and the learning centre has evolved to make integration possible, should it ever happen.

The Rvwang and Mon centres have had to face similar questions about their futures. The aspirational hope for representatives from each centre is that one day resettlement to another country will happen. To prepare for this, both centres provide English classes and receive volunteers from outside the community who can assist in language learning. The existential challenge faced by representatives from both centres is the prospect for resettlement is less likely, and with no

immediate desire to integrate into Malaysian society, the remaining options are limited. Representatives from the Mon centre have now accepted that the previously unimaginable thought of returning home is the new reality, and so the centre has evolved into a self-sufficient ethnosphere that encapsulates core aspects of Mon identity and prepares children for life in a new country. Other than repatriation, there are few options remaining for representatives from the Mon centre. The next evolution sees the Mon centre preparing children not for life overseas in America or Australia, but back in Myanmar, and Burmese language classes are one strategy that is being used to prepare those who will return home. The Rvwang centre, though, does not offer Burmese classes yet, which begs the question as to how it will evolve to meet the future challenge of returning home.

The learning centres began as vessels through which to preserve the core values of each community, and this remains a central role and function. The challenges of running the centres and the pressure from legal and cultural structures have forced them to develop strategies and responses to mitigate threats and assimilative forces. Fundamentally, representatives from each centre will have to decide how to navigate an uncertain future. What is evident is that while the centres are susceptible to numerous forces and threats, they are also highly adept at adapting to meeting challenges head-on and evolving to do so.

Main Research Question

"What is the role of learning centres for refugee communities in Malaysia?"

The overarching research question of this study was designed to be purposefully broad and general in order to avoid making presumptions before the study had even commenced. The data collected from interviews, participant

observations, and analysis over three consecutive chapters allowed for themes to be generated and insight to evolve through the use of analytical lenses. The findings bring together the culmination of the study and provide an answer to the central research question. There are a number of roles associated with the learning centres, but this section focuses on the primary ones. First and foremost, the learning centres are safe protective spaces where children who are enroled are provided with a safe area to learn and play while family members are away working. This service is vital for refugees with children as the alternative would be for parents to stay home with their children and make no money or leave the children unattended, which is inconceivable for any parent, especially considering the dangers and threats that present themselves on a daily basis. The learning centres offer peace of mind and reassurance that the child is in safe hands so that money can be made to support the family during what might be many years in the country.

Next, the uncertainty faced by refugee communities in protracted situations means that during fragmented journeys that can last for many years, individuals anchor themselves to core values that provide a sense of belonging and attachment to a social group. This is especially salient in Malaysia, which is vastly different from the homeland, and with the slight exception of the Rohingya group, offers no value to identity. One key role of the learning centres is to ensure that the core values of each respective group are upheld and passed on to the next generation. In discussing the work of Spindler (1973), Strouse (2000) examines the role of government schools in the United States, and suggests that "[t]o ensure maintenance of the cultural system, the schools are organised to socialise students to the values, beliefs, and attitudes critical in maintaining the cultural system" (p. 3). There is some crossover with the role of schools in America and the learning

centres. The main difference is that the cultural system in America refers to a nationalist outlook where children are assimilated into an American ideal. The learning centres in this study work on a micro-level and address issues not associated with nationality, but aspects that correlate specifically to ethnic identity and community membership. Attaining a sense of identity was voiced by the participants in this study and was often expressed via a hope for their children to know the language, history, faith, or culture of the community, for the lack thereof would mean the child would essentially become lost. A focus on core values and developing strategies so that these values are retained and, more importantly, inculcated into the next generation means that through the learning centres children will attain a sense of belonging, one that directly correlates to their parents and the social group to which they seek entrance.

One rationale for the emphasis on the preservation of core values in the learning centres is the impact of acculturation. All individuals and groups are impacted by the effects of it (Sam & Berry, 2010), and the core values safeguarded by each centre are under constant threat from competing languages, faiths, and cultures that are more dominant. Hence, a vital role of the centres is to manage acculturation through responses. For example, each centre approaches language shift and maintenance depending on the perceived present and future needs of the communities they serve. Ultimately, the role of the learning centre is to equip children with the tools necessary to traverse the fragmented journey, which is marred by uncertainty. As children and families find themselves in new and unfamiliar environments, the one constant certainty provided by the learning centres is an understanding of who they are and where they came from.

Implications

Refugee Education in Malaysia: Moving Forward

Refugee education in Malaysia has been, is, and will continue to be a contentious issue. With a change in government in Malaysia, the hope is a breakthrough may happen that provides access to state education with news agencies reporting that talks are underway, though access would potentially be limited to two groups, which include children with one parent who is Malaysian and children from the Muslim/Rohingya diaspora ("Government to Consider," 2019; Aiman, 2019). The findings from this study demonstrate that there is a willingness of some groups, such as the Rohingya in this study, to integrate more closely into Malaysian society. Islam being the dominant faith in Malaysia aligns well with the core value of the Rohingya centre, and the use of the host nation's language means children who enter Malaysian state schools do so with a sense of familiarity, which may lessen the stress of adjusting to a new school environment. While access to state schools would certainly be beneficial for representatives from the Rvwang and Mon communities given the access to trained teachers, learning materials, and a structured curriculum, this should be done with mindfulness. Refugee groups are not homogenous. Even groups from the same homeland are markedly disparate as this study has shown, and individual idiosyncrasies in terms of language, faith, or culture can further render integration challenging. Moving forward, learning centres may act as a barometer for future integration into state schools. Children who attend centres that emphasise closer ties with the host nation through language, for example, may be more amenable to attending national schools. Conversely, children in centres that are entrenched in ethnic values may find integration in state schools more challenging and will need more time to adjust.

This is not to suggest that access to state education should not be offered to all. Rather, the findings in this study show that the learning centres reflect the needs of their representatives, and in the case of the Rvwang and Mon, they are steadfast in ensuring the maintenance of their core values. Therefore, if the government should decide to provide access to state schools, this should be done with the knowledge that refugee groups are heterogeneous and bring with them their distinct cultures. If access is not provided, funding for refugee schools in Malaysia would be best focused on the provision of secondary schools where there is a severe shortage. There are, of course, numerous pre-secondary schools that cater to children between 5 years to early teens, but these places ensure an education that only the community can provide—one that is rooted in the community's values that they want to pass on. Secondary education, though, could be multi-cultural and use a language such as English to be the lingua franca for all ethnic groups. In the meantime, when access to secondary state school or otherwise is unavailable, it would be advantageous for a learning centre to learn from the Rohingya centre and partner with a local charity or NGO that is registered in Malaysia by Malaysian nationals.

The partnership would not see the NGO take complete control of the inner workings of the centre as this would remain firmly with the community. The NGO would primarily be the face of the centre to the Malaysian public and function as a tool to collect donations and deal with the authorities if the situation arose. With an additional layer of protection and an avenue in which to spread the word for donations, this would somewhat ease the pressure on the centre, staff, and children and provide one less challenge to cope with.

Learning Centres and Complementary Schools

The findings presented in this study have shown the importance that individuals and groups hold to their core values. Parents and families look to informal schools that reflect their values (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). The centres in this study are the physical embodiment of these values, as they function to pass them on to the next generation. Refugee schools, complementary schools, and weekend schools can be found all over the world, and the single purpose they potentially hold is ensuring that the core value of that community, such as language, culture, faith, and history are passed on. England in the United Kingdom has seen a spike in homeschooling with 60,000 registered in 2018 alone ("LGBT School Lessons," 2019), and another recent report documented that 500 so-called illegal schools were discovered in England, 21% of which were faith schools (Weale, 2019). What this tells us is that parents and families value education that reflects who they are, and this applies to refugees and minority groups especially who live in countries where their values are not represented in large state schooling systems. Further research is therefore needed to explore these schools not from the outside, but from the inside in order to establish their aims and function.

As societies become more plural, education should reflect the needs of the country, but it should also resonate with all groups and should reflect who they are. If state education is unable to do this, complementary schools should be encouraged to provide a balance. This would benefit not only refugees who enter a country, but existing groups who feel separated or marginalised from state education systems. Aid agencies and local council authorities should be encouraged to work more closely with refugee and complementary schools in order to learn from them as they provide valuable insight into what is important for the communities they serve.

Doing this may provide valuable insight into the community and provide avenues for cooperation or compromise to be made so the children can be integrated back into state schools.

Learning from Learning Centres

Though this study was conducted in refugee schools in Malaysia, there are questions that educators, policymakers, and politicians around the world can reflect on when considering the schools they are responsible for. Currently, the aim of state-run education is to inculcate children into a single national identity, whereupon graduating they will be prepared for the labour force and conditioned to the values and norms that will allow them to function in society. Yet, even in the most ethnically homogenous regions there exist cultural, linguistic, religious, and historical differences that are impacted by a curricular that serves the interests of the nation and not the community. As this study has shown, family alone is not enough to maintain culture, language, history, or faith. Social institutions, such as learning centres, are crucial so that meaningful interaction can take place where people impart aspects that are unique to that particular social group.

Strouse (2000) raises some interesting questions which are pertinent to all forms of education and schooling, whether it be public, private, complementary, or refugee. Strouse asks to what extent values, beliefs, and attitudes should be taught in schools, and whether teachers should strive to be neutral. The argument is: "Students, too, (sic) will come to the classroom with their own special set of values: orientations that reflect their family upbringing, ethnic background, religious beliefs, social class, and childhood experiences" (Strouse, 2000, p. 3/4). Present-day education is largely a conceptualisation of the needs of the industrial revolution,

where students were no longer educated for entrance into their communities but for the benefit of the nation. Education, therefore, takes a very broad macro view of society in order to bring the population in line with the aims of the nation, thus omitting regional cultural differences. There is a need to explore education in micro or regional terms where it reflects not only the nation but the local community. An argument could be made for schools to embed into the syllabus aspects that are pertinent to the surrounding community. These might be historical, cultural, or learning about local groups in the area. The idea is to look at education not only as nation-building but as community building, and part of that is localising the educational experience.

Defining Education

Education for all is enshrined as an international human right (Howard-Hassmann, 2018; Nicolai & Tripplehorn, 2003). Primary education should be free and accessible for all, and there should be more provisions for secondary schooling, especially in Malaysia. There is no question that education should be available for all, but questions should be raised as to who is providing education and how education is defined by the provider. These questions hold a lot of significance because given how it is interpreted will impact the receiver. For example, a Western view of education that is secular would neglect individuals who value faith and its teaching. This is an issue that is culminating in numerous debates in the U.K. at present with Muslim families protesting the content of some lessons (Ferguson, 2019).

Who also matters, as the individual, organisation, or state that is providing education will do so with their own culture, values, and norms embedded. An easy

example here is the language in which education is being provided, which brings with it aspects that differ from that of the receiver. While education for all may on the surface seem to be a noble endeavour, it is a structure with the power to provide learning but also change. It is the latter that should be of the most concern as those who are powerless are often the recipients of education, and these individuals may be unaware of the consequences that education can bring. The final sentence of Article 26 of the Declaration of Human Rights states: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children" (United Nations, 2019). This final statement is an easy way to avoid accountability as any negative washback can be placed on the parents as it was 'their right to choose.' This assumes that the parents are fully conscious and aware of the power of education and that they have investigated the curriculum, syllabus, and hidden cultural components to see if they are in line with their own culture and values. Education's influence is so widespread and profound that the intended implementation of educational programmes to provide stability and reduce anxiety among immigrants and refugees may have a short-term positive impact, but a long-term negative impact as the culture and language of the schools slowly impacts the child's ethnic heritage. What is needed is for refugee education to be seen through a new lens—one that views the educational experience and schooling as a long-term endeavour through the eyes of the refugees who provide it.

Doing this first requires an understanding of what refugee education is. While there are many definitions of education available, each with their own interpretation rooted in the time it was developed and influenced by the ideological outlook of the creator, looking back through the course of research into education, a definition offered over 100 years ago still remains relevant in many ways today:

> Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined (Durkheim, 1956, p. 71)

Using Dirkheim's definition as a guide and incorporating the findings from this study, a definition of education that suits the specific content of refugees in protracted situations begins to emerge:

> Education for refugees in protracted situations is influenced by adult generations to prepare adolescents for an uncertain future—one that may entail a prolonged fragmented journey, resettlement, or repatriation. The objective of this education is to prepare the child academically whilst instilling core values that connect them to the community of their parents, and for these values to remain with the child through their journey to the final destination and beyond.

Using this definition as a guide, researchers, aid agencies, and policymakers can begin to reconceptualise and develop education for refugees in protracted situations. Given the length of time refugees spend in exile, the provision of education needs to address this challenge. Education needs to be understood from the communities that deliver it, as they are the stabilising force in the lives of the children. When policies change, funding is cut, and aid focus is shifted to different crises, the communities and their learning centres remain. This is why education needs to be defined not by the people prescribing and providing it, but by the communities themselves who are delivering it.

This definition is specifically aimed at learning centres that have community involvement and input such as the Rvwang and Mon centres, and to some extent, the Rohingya centre. For learning centres that have been established by NGOs, volunteers, or church groups from outside the community, instilling core values will be challenging especially if the student body is comprised of disparate groups. Even so, the definition still applies as a guide for these schools, for research suggests that where possible a multicultural, inclusive environment should be protected and encouraged (Berry, 1997; Berry et al., 2006; Symons & Ponzio, 2019). This is something for policymakers, aid agencies, and countries of resettlement to consider as integration requires knowledge of the host nation, but retention of the home culture. More often than not, the focus lies with integrating those into the language and culture of the host nation while leaving ethnic language and culture to be taken care of by the parents. Therefore, schools in any context, refugee or otherwise, need to consider how they align their core values with the values of the children who come from different backgrounds. In doing so, not only will the child feel part of the school, but so will the child's family, and as a significant influence on the child's life, the parents need to feel that the school is imparting something of them in their child. Doing this is complex, but it can start with a dialogue with communities and a discussion of how to incorporate core values into the school. One example would be to learn from learning centres and have a dedicated day or time in the week where ethnic languages can be used or even shared.

Limitations

Following a post-positivist, interpretivist theoretical outlook on research, this study is not subject to the same limitations that an experimental study would

have, for example. Still, even in the qualitative paradigm that this study is presented, limitations that could not be foreseen or overcome occurred. The first relates to participants. While the study was able to conduct interviews with a wide array of participants, two groups were not featured. The first group were students at the Rvwang centre, who were too young to be interviewed. The second group were parents from the Rohingya centre—none of whom were willing to be interviewed in person, though they held no objections to the presence of the researcher in the centre. The voices of these two groups would have provided additional points for cross-comparative analysis. Nevertheless, as the study was conducted on three separate sites, a level of diversity and adequate number of participants provided enough insight into the lived experience of the participants to reach a level of saturation where the same findings were captured.

One limitation that was overcome was the role of the researcher, as he was solely responsible for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. To address the potential for bias, positionality, influence, and even impartiality, the researcher utilised critical friends in the form of the research supervisors and individuals external of the research, and the university itself to critique and provide feedback on aspects of the research process. In addition to this, the researcher remained reflexive throughout the whole process and retained a reflexive journal to critique aspects related to the analysis of data and findings. Finally, to ensure the analysis of the findings were more robust, a two-level analysis were developed whereby the data was first analysed using grounded theory techniques, after which the same data was analysed using themes captured from the literature. A cross-comparative analysis was then carried out on the themes from each layer of analysis

to identify relationships and divergence, and where there was significant divergence, the data were analysed again to for confirmation.

Further Research

Future Research with Learning Centres

For those wishing to research learning centres in Malaysia or in the context of other countries, using the findings from this study provides the groundwork for future studies to develop research questions and/or hypotheses. Based on the analytical work and findings from this study, a number of questions are presented below for those planning to undertake research in refugee or alternative educational settings (Table 8.1).

Areas for Future Research	Questions
Imagined Community	How is the imagined community envisioned though the learning centres? How is the imagined community constructed?
Core Values	What is the primary core value that is driven by the learning centre?
Acculturation Strategy	How does the learning centre address acculturation? What relationship does the learning centre seek with the surrounding communities or host nation?
Protective Strategy	Which threats are faced by the learning centre? Are the threats realistic or symbolic in nature? How are these threats mitigated?
Preparation	What future trajectories is the learning centre preparing the students for? How does the learning centre achieve this?

Structure	How do structures (legal, social, transnational) influence the centres? How do structures (legal, social, transnational) influence the imagined community, core values, acculturation strategy, protective strategy, preparation?

Table 8.1: Research Questions for Future Studies

Language Maintenance and Shift

Given the years that refugees spend in protracted situations, the impact on language is significant, with groups going to great lengths to maintain their language or even shift their language. Numerous studies of refugee and immigrant groups in countries of resettlement have shown the influence of language acculturation (see Filmore, 1991; Fishman, 1964, 2013), especially in a shift to the dominant language of the country. For refugees in protracted situations, though, this is different. This study has shown how some groups use the learning centres for language maintenance and language shift. Further research needs to be carried out in other locations to investigate the language maintenance and shift tendencies of communities, and the impact that their protracted situation has on language development. To contrast the numerous studies available in settler countries, studies would be best placed to work with representatives who are still on the fragmented journey and have yet to reach the final destination.

Core Values

A significant motivational driver for each learning centre was their attachment to core values. These form the bedrock of each centre and to a large

extent, underscore and influence the protective strategy, the imagined community, and acculturation response. Seen through a core values lens, researchers could first identify the core values that are prominent in the refugee or complementary school and investigate why these values are salient. Researchers could then use this information to explore further and explain why some communities disconnect from society and establish educational institutions that are separated from state schooling systems.

Identity Construction

An exploratory theoretical discussion of the learning centres as places of identity construction is presented in Chapter 5. This area requires further investigation, especially from the perspective of refugees in protracted situations, as their uncertain futures present a more complex notion of identity and how it is reproduced in the learning centres. More in-depth research could explore to what extent the learning centres influence identity construction and if the identity of the students is consistent with the identity promoted by the centre. Further to this, studies should seek to explore this area from a multidimensional perspective where various areas such as language, faith, culture, and the background of the host and home nation are used to construct an idea of identity.

Safe Spaces

As presented in Chapter 4, protection was conceptualised into safe spaces that viewed the learning centres as protecting children from physical harm in addition to providing a place for ethnic expression. This is contextualised for this

particular study, so researchers could explore other educational contexts in different countries to identify how safe spaces are constructed and conceptualised.

Preparation for the Future

The provision of education for refugees is often thought about in immediate terms. Yet, this study has shown that the learning centres function with the future in mind and how best to prepare for it. Language is a key area as it can assist children in settling in the country, in returning home, or in being resettled. The three learning centres in this study are preparing for three different futures. Clearly state schools are preparing children for the future, but for refugees in protracted situations it is far more nuanced and complex as the future is uncertain. A lot more research needs to be conducted in different contexts to explore how learning centres prepare for the future, and what is being prepared for. To build on the work of this study, research could examine learning centres established by NGOs and charities of which have little community involvement. In this case, how these schools prepare for the future would provide an interesting contrast to this study.

The Function and Role of NGO Refugee Schools

The primary focus of this study has been learning centres established and managed by the community (Rvwang and Mon), and a learning centre that partners with an NGO (Rohingya). As an interesting contrast to this study, research should be conducted in refugee schools that are completely managed and run by NGOs with little community involvement. This study could investigate the protractive strategies, how the imagined community is constructed, and the impact of

acculturation. It would provide an interesting counterbalance to this study and would lead to further insight into the role and impact of learning centres.

Research on Education for Refugees in Protracted Situations

The findings in this dissertation present the groundwork for what the researcher hopes will be more exploration in the field of education for refugees in protracted situations. While some suggestions have been made for areas to be investigated, the researcher calls for institutions and researchers from all fields and backgrounds to dedicate their time and efforts to this area of enquiry. The number of people in protracted situations is only going to increase, so a concerted effort is required to build an understanding of the educational challenges, needs, and aspirations of individuals and communities who provide education for children in exile.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the focus of this study is an exploration of the role and function of learning centres for refugees in protracted situations. Scholarly enquiry is noticeably lacking in this area, with most research conducted in countries of settlement. The reason for this is that societies that are plural have to study how best to assist refugee and immigrant populations to integrate into state schools. While this remains an important line of research, studies might be missing a significant part of the picture, which is the prior educational experiences of individuals that have navigated the fragmented journey before settling.

This study shows how persistent groups are in terms of identity maintenance and the strategies that are used to ensure their preservation. Therefore,

a lot more research is required to connect the protracted educational experience with the settlement education experience, in order for the needs and aspirations of refugee and immigrant groups to be better understood. What this dissertation has attempted to demonstrate is that the creation of a learning centre states the intention of a social group of their aspiration for children to be raised in a safe environment, which is in keeping with their language, faith, values, and culture.

Key Takeaways

I. The literature on education and schooling for refugees in protracted situations is severely limited. The findings from this study add to the small amount of research in the field and form the groundwork for future studies to build on.

II. The first in-depth investigation of learning centres in Malaysia is presented in this thesis. It demonstrates that these places evolve to become dynamic, complex ethnospheres that are the nexus of the community and encapsulate the specific culture of the communities they serve.

III. For refugees in protracted situations, the learning centres are vital for transmitting information that is pertinent to community membership, such as knowledge of language, culture, and faith.

IV. A working conceptualisation of the centres as ethnic safe spaces is presented in Chapter 4, whereby the centres take on the role of protecting children from realistic and symbolic threats in an environment which emphasises the free expression of ethnic identity.

V. Learning centres are enclosed within imagined communities that are constructed around identity (language, faith, culture) and preparation for the

future, all of which are impacted by transnational legal and social structures that influence how each imagined community evolves.

VI. A working conceptual model is presented in Chapter 5 that outlines the potential influence learning centres have on the reproduction of ethnic identity and its construction.

VII. While most of the research on language shift and loss is conducted in countries of settlement, this dissertation presents the first findings of how learning centres are used by refugees in protracted situations to manage language shift and maintenance based on the future trajectory of the community.

VIII. Core values intersect all aspects of life: protection, identity, and preparations for the future. Knowledge of values safeguarded in learning centres is vital to understand why some communities, refugee or otherwise, disconnect from the wider society and forge educational solutions that more accurately reflect their values.

IX. Acculturation is managed differently by each centre depending on the core values that are held and the relationship desired with the host nation. The core values of the Rvwang and Mon centres of language and cultural preservation lead them to a response of separation, whereas the core value of religion in the Rohingya centre leads them to a response of assimilation.

X. This dissertation builds on previous work of a conceptualisation of education for refugees in protracted situations by including three additional aspects (protection, preservation, and preparation) that adds to an understanding of how this form of education functions.

XI. Fundamentally, the learning centres are an extension of the communities they serve and provide an anchor point for children while assisting in the management and negotiation of life in Malaysia.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Questions for Semi-structured Interviews

Backgroud Questions for Each Participant

- Where are you from?
- How long have you been in Malaysia?
- Why did you come to Malaysia?

Background of the centre

- When was the centre established and why?
- Who started it and why?
- Number of teachers, students, volunteers?
- What subjects are taught and why?
- Has the centre remained in the same place?
- What are the main challenges the centre faces?
- What are the plans for the future?

Questions to Parents

- Before your child was enroled in the school what did they do?
- How long after you came to Malaysia did you enrol your child?
- How did you learn about the centre?
- Why did you choose this centre?
- What subjects are important for your child to learn and why?
- What are your plans for the future?
- If there was no centre what would you do?
- What challeges do you face?

Questions for Teachers

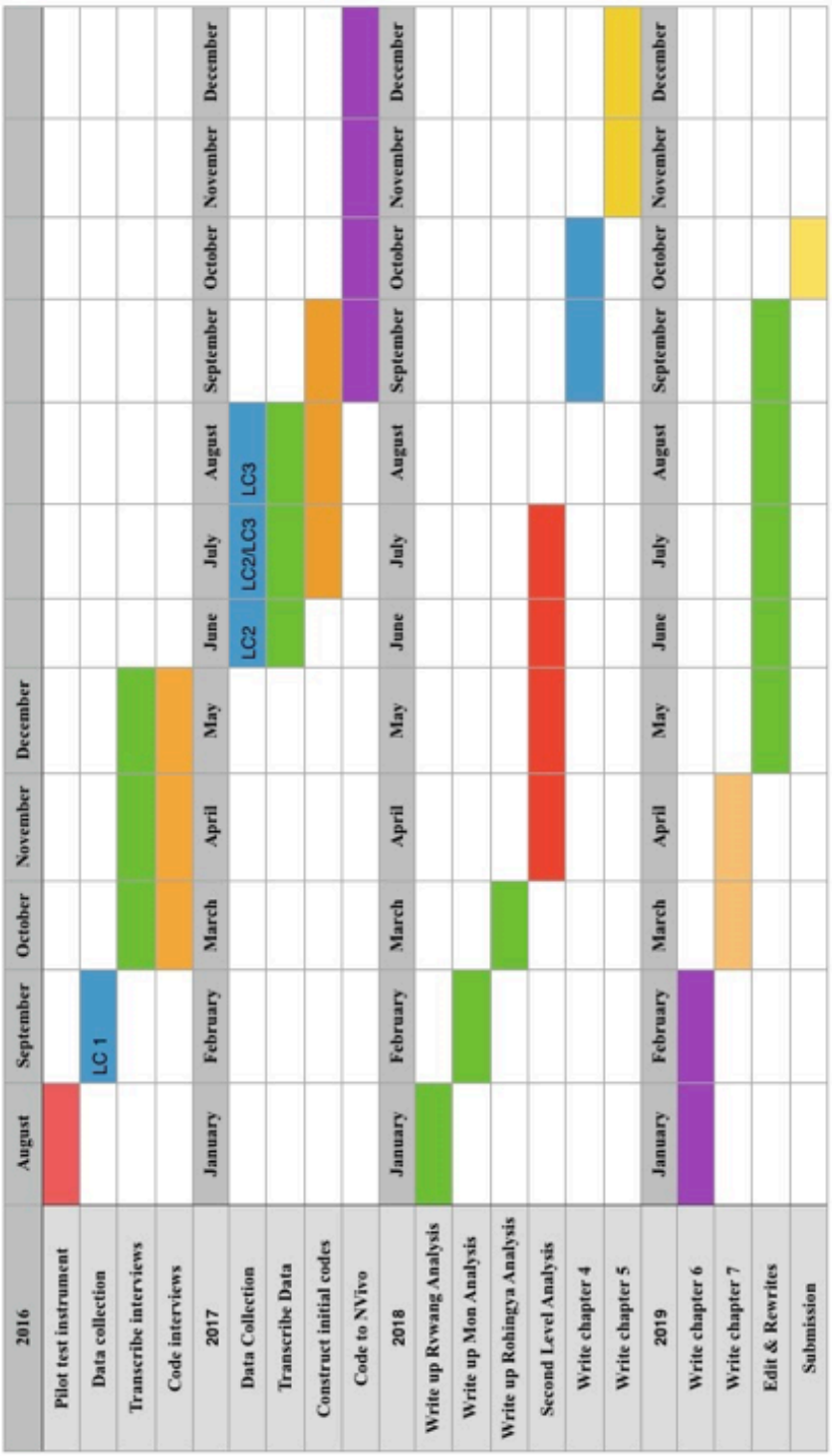
- How long have you worked in the centre?

- Why did you choose to work here?
- What subjects do you teach?
- What language do you teach and use?
- What subjects are important and why?
- What challeges do you face?

Questions to students

- How long have you studied here?
- What did you do before coming here?
- What subjects do you like why?
- What languages do you speak and use?
- Where would you like to study after the centre?
- What do you do for fun?
- What challenges do you face?

Appendix 2– Research Time Line



Appendix 3 – Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
School of Education

Project title: What is the role of learning centres for displaced communities in Malaysia?

Researcher's name: Simon Williams

Supervisor's name: Dr. Gana Subramaniam & Dr. Lucy Bailey

- I have read the Participant Information. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and what I will do.
- I understand that I can stop participating in the project at any time.
- I understand that my interview answers might be published, but my personal information will not be used.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during this interview and this will be transcribed.
- I understand that data (audio files, notes, transcriptions) will be stored on the researcher's computer and stored on a cloud storage platform. Only the researcher will have access to the data, which will be password protected.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed ..... (research participant)

Print name .....

Appendix 4 – Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
School of Education

Project Title: What is the role of education for displaced communities?

Researcher: Simon Williams - kabx5sjw@nottingham.edu.my /
simonjwilliams79@gmail.com
Supervisor : Dr. Gana Subramaniam & Dr. Lucy Bailey.
ganakumaran.Subra@nottingham.edu.my
lucy.Bailey@nottingham.edu.my

This is an invitation to take part in a research concerning the role of learning centres for displaced communities. This information is designed to tell you what it will involve.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may change your mind about being involved, or decline to answer a particular question or stop the recording at any time, and without giving a reason. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study.

What is the project about?

This study is interested in the role of education for displaced communities, and will investigate what role learning centres play in the lives of these people.

Who is being asked to take part, and why?

Three learning centres have been asked to participate in the study. Each learning centre represents a different nationality so that we can understand the similarities and differences between them. From each centre, the study will meet and talk to administrators, teachers, parents and students.

What will I be asked to do?

If you take part, someone would like to meet and ask you questions. This will take around one hour. You can decide the day and time, and the person will meet you at a place which is convenient for you. The interviewer will record the audio or make notes and then transcribe the interview so he can

read and understand it in more detail. He will then use the information you gave him and compare it with the answers of other interviewees. Your name and private information will be completely confidential. The researcher will change your name and protect your identity at all times. The researcher will keep your private information in a password protected file, which only he will be able to access.

Will the research be of any personal benefit to me?

The research cannot promise any short term benefits as it will take a number of years to understand and explain the data that is collected. But, the information you provide will help to explain the needs and aspirations for learning centres in displaced communities. This understanding may help NGOs, policymakers, and volunteers to be better prepared to assist learning centres to provide the services that better reflect what they hope to achieve.

What will happen to the information I provide?

Protecting your personal information is taken very seriously. Audio recording and transcriptions will be kept by the researcher in a secure location and password protected on his computer. The files will not be shared or used without your permission. When the researcher writes the research paper, the names and locations of yourself and the learning centre will be changed to protect your identity. This issue is very important to the researcher and he will take measures to guarantee you are protected. At the end of the study the researcher will return the audio files, transcriptions and any other documents back to you. Or, with your permission, the researcher will destroy the data.

What will you do with the data?

The data used will be presented to Nottingham University as part of a doctoral research study. The research data may also be used in future research papers, and published in international journals so others may read the findings of the study. On completion of the study, the researcher will present his findings to you and the learning centre so you may learn what was discovered.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can be contacted before and after your participation at the above address.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

If you have any queries or complaints about this study, please contact the student's supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve the query to your satisfaction, please write to the Administrator to the Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology's Research Ethics Committee

(educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk) who will pass your query to the Chair of the Committee.