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FROM INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN ASIA TO ANGLOPHONE WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITIES: STUDENT PREPARATION, TRANSITION, AND DEVELOPMENT

Dissertation

by

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From International Schools in Asia to Anglophone World-Class Universities:

Student Preparation, Transition, and Development

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Abstract

Today's global knowledge economy has become complex, dynamic, and competitive. In this environment, the talented workforce is increasingly diverse, educated, and mobile. International talents tend to migrate to anglophone countries and contribute to technological innovation, scientific discoveries, and economic growth. The largest international student population in the top destination countries comes from Asia. At the same time, research has shown that Asian international students reported lower satisfaction and higher adjustment challenges due to linguistic and cultural barriers, negatively impacting their learning and living experiences.

This dissertation aims to understand and explain the transnational transition process through a subset of the Asian international student population. Thirty-five current university student interviewees are purposefully selected. They are graduates of the "International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme," a rigorous education pathway program popular in Asia for families to prepare their children for Western higher education. Asian International Baccalaureate (IB) alums, who received education in linguistically and culturally diverse settings, offered more nuanced and complex answers to what traditional literature has indicated about international student transitions and experiences.

A Successful International University Transition Model is generated from the grounded theory analysis. This model illustrates the causal and intervening conditions that impact international transitions, with the central tasks of being a university student and becoming an adult. Further, the results are discussed with Bourdieu's concepts of habitus/practice to explain the heterogeneity in the process amongst the diverse international student population. Lastly, recommendations to stakeholders suggest ways to support globally mobile young adults in their transition and development journey.

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This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of my dissertation committee, mentors, colleagues, family, and friends. To Hans de Wit, my advisor, for taking me into the doctoral program as “guan men di zi (last official supervising cohort).” These four words mean the world to a Chinese student. To my dissertation readers and mentors, Gerardo Blanco, Chris Glass, and Maureen Kenny, for their time, guidance, and expertise. To the kind colleagues at IB and CIS for their assistance and the wonderful interview participants for their trust.

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To the mighty women of my family. Born in 1943 in a poor village, my maternal grandmother was almost drowned because she was not a son. As a little girl, she climbed over mountains for school at dawn and studied under a dim light at night. Being the only one in her family and village to receive a proper education, she became a diligent doctor and pushed her daughters pass the difficult GaoKao to enter university. When people in our lower-income agricultural region were prejudiced against women with PhDs, my mother encouraged me to pursue education abroad and even for a doctorate. These women do not have the knowledge or capacity to read this dissertation. But this work is only possible because they defied the oppressive social conventions and epitomized the transformative power of education. They remind me how far we have come and why I should conduct research that aligns well with my identity and value. If we want to build a more equitable world, millions and billions of students will go through similar education processes and would appreciate understanding and assistance.

To my loving father, family relatives, and friends in China, even though I could not visit them at home for four years due to the pandemic restrictions. To my better half Chenyu, who accompanied and listened to me on this dissertation during our long walk around the scenic Chestnut Hill, Middlesex Fells, Hudson River, Boston Harbor, and Sumida River.

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List of Abbreviations

CIS: The Council of International Schools

IB: The International Baccalaureate

IBDP: The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

SES: Socio-economic Status

The Model: The Successful International University Transition Model

Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation is about how young adults transition and develop during the transnational university transition process. It is an interpretive inquiry that seeks to understand the college transition experiences from the views of Asian international students who graduated from the IB Diploma Programme and then pursued higher education abroad. This inquiry attempts to generate a theory about a complex process, a process as complex as becoming an adult and transitioning to a foreign educational and living environment. In this chapter, I will outline the background of this study, the formal statement of the problem, the research questions, the conceptual and theoretical framework, and its educational significance. In addition, I will discuss limitations and delimitations, as well as my researcher positionality.

1. Background of the Study

This dissertation is my practice to converse and engage with multiple academic fields: international education, higher education, youth studies, identity development, and mobility studies. This study primarily situates Asian IB alums in international higher education because of their educational stage and space. As these students transition into universities abroad, they are often viewed as "international students," which is a crucial component of the internationalization of higher education under the influence of globalization. *Globalization*, a term that originated in the 1960s in international economics, refers to the international flow of goods, money, ideas, information, and people (Shields, 2013). Occurrences and developments at the global level can impact domestic, while local happenings generate global repercussions (Giddens, 1991; Held & McGrew, 2007). To understand the effect of globalization on education, prevalent discussions worldwide include the knowledge economy, lifelong learning, global migration, brain circulation, and neoliberalism (Spring, 2008). Viewing human capital as an important asset in the

knowledge economy, national policymakers, NGOs, and multi-national corporations aim "to ensure an education that will help graduates to participate in the global economy" (p.352).

Many nations and institutions have formulated policies or strategies to internationalize higher education and recruit international students in this interconnected global condition. The rationales are often motivated by a range of factors: geopolitics, soft power, demographic changes, academic excellence pursuit, and revenue increase (de Wit, 2002). *Internationalization* is the choices and decisions undertaken by academic systems, institutions, and sometimes individual departments. The internationalization of higher education policies could facilitate student or faculty exchanges, collaborative research activities, English-medium-instruction academic programs (or other languages), and a myriad of other actions (Altbach, 2016).

The history of the international flow of students and scholars can be traced back to medieval Europe when the first universities were established and centuries later by colonialism (Altbach, 2016). Nevertheless, international students could be viewed as a modern product of the internationalization of higher education, while the motivation, trend, and pattern are shaped by various influences (Altbach, 2016). In the international education market, on the supply side, nations and institutions provide transnational education to attract global talents. On the demand side, families and individuals seek better academic and life opportunities. Consequently, international students have been growing at a fast speed. Before the pandemic, over 5.6 million higher education students were mobile in 2019-2020 (Institute of International Education, 2020). The number had more than doubled over the past 20 years and is anticipated to increase to 8 million in 2025 (UNESCO, 2020a).

Although the globally mobile student population is still relatively small compared to the domestic students, they are diverse and form the global middle-class base. Measured by the

numbers of people of total spending as $11 to $110 per person per day in 2011 purchasing power parity terms, there were 3.2 billion people worldwide in this category by 2016 (Kharas, 2017). The global middle class is fast-growing in emerging economies, and 88 percent of the next billion will be in the Asia Pacific region (p.2). A narrower definition is perhaps more appropriate to refer to the upper segment of the middle classes in developing countries that are more affluent and globally oriented (Koo, 2016). Such growth has significant social implications, as middle-class households tend to invest in their children's education (Kharas, 2017).

Academic research from multiple disciplines has examined international student mobility and experiences for educational purposes, national talent strategies, or institution financial interests. Past studies have covered college student recruitment processes, cultural adjustments, linguistic problems, living experiences, and learning outcomes (Gümüş et al., 2020; Jing et al., 2020). Early studies from psychology and counseling have also documented various challenges associated with international students, such as culture shock, isolation and homesickness, language-related difficulties, acculturative stress, and discrimination (Arthur, 2004; Mori, 2000).

2. Problem Statement

One international student population that has received much attention is the students from Asia who attend universities in anglophone countries, including the USA, UK, Canada, and Australia. Students from Asian countries (China, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong SAR, and South Korea) reported lower overall satisfaction than students from France, the USA, Italy, and Germany (Ammigan et al., 2021). Scholars have suggested that a lack of understanding of cultural norms and English language proficiencies negatively impacted international student adjustments (Andrade, 2006; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006).

The global flow of international students is primarily from lower-income to higher-income English-speaking countries and regions. This population comprises students from emerging economies with a growing middle-class base in China, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand. Although international student numbers are still small compared to domestic student enrollment numbers, these young adults traveling across borders would become the global talent foundation whether they remain in the host country or return home with advanced international higher education training and credentials.

When considering globalization and the future of international higher education, a particular Asian student population stands out from the general international student pool. Their English language fluency and European/American cultural familiarity result from one condition: these students have previously attended international schools designed for western anglophone higher education. International schools have developed quickly in Asia with an appeal to local families and will continue to prepare students for international higher education, especially in English-speaking countries.

I am conducting this study because we lack a good understanding of these students' college experiences. The rising middle class in Asia that pursues transnational higher education will likely produce future skilled professionals who become the core foundation of any society. It makes their educational experience an important topic for students, their families, K-12 and higher education institutions and educators, and nations. How students experience transnational education and decide on future development is important to the globally mobile population, the global middle class, and even the elite class base. Thus, there is a need to focus on this population in light of current research suggests: international students from Asia are more likely to encounter linguistic and cultural barriers that affect their adjustment and learning experience.

We also know that pre-college preparation influences students' college experiences and success. While there is a rich literature on both international higher education and international high schools, what has not been explored is how these two stages connect and how these students transition and develop during this journey.

3. Research Question

This dissertation explores the experiences of Asian international students who graduated from international IBDP and enrolled in Anglophone higher education institutions. I am interested in young adults entering a new social, cultural, and political educational setting and then adjusting and developing in such an environment. As such, the theoretical construct is "transnational university transition for Asian students from IB program." The main research question is intentionally designed to be broad and general, so I could use a qualitative grounded theory approach to understand participants' experiences holistically and comprehensively. The guiding research question is:

What theory/model explains how students were able (or not able) to experience a successful international university transition?

3.1 Rationale for choosing IBDP alums as participants

There are many varied forms of international high schools in Asia, and I chose IBDP graduates as my research participants. IBDP is a clear category of high school graduates, of which reliable data exists, and they can act – with recognition of the similarities and differences outlined in chapter 5 – as a proxy population to understand the trend of the international secondary school sector's development in Asia.

4. Overview of Research Design

Grounded theory, in short, consists of a systematic approach to inquiry for theory construction (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory is used in this study to develop a model from the perspective of current university international student. Two types of data are utilized in this study analysis. Primary data from interviews is analyzed to generate the theoretical model; secondary data from International Baccalaureate is used for descriptive evaluation and comparison. More details on research methods and theory generation are presented in Chapter Three and Four.

The research population comprises students who fulfill all the following criteria: self-identify as Asian; graduated from international high schools in Asia; completed their first year of university in a country different from their passport country or high school country. As such, the participants could effectively reflect upon their transnational transition experiences as first-year university students from 2020 to 2021. Research participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). Thirty-five interviewees participated in this study. They came from small-sized international high schools in Asia (China, Hong Kong SAR, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam) that graduated 21 to 150 students per academic year.

Among the qualified 35 participants, eight students are recruited from a pilot study that I conducted in 2021. They joined for the second round of interviews, adding a longitudinal perspective to their stories. I asked overlapping semi-structured questions over the two rounds of interviews. Such process allowed me to compare and corroborate between participants stories on the transition process. The Model is effectively constructed based on 47 interviews with 37 participants over two years.

5. Definition of Key Terms

5.1 International students

As modes of delivery, content, and providers in international higher education have become increasingly international, a broad definition tends to neglect the complexity of international student mobility (de Wit, 2008; Wang, L., 2022). The commonly used definitions by UNESCO and OECD emphasize border-crossing and visa-issuing, yet both activities were paused during the pandemic. This dissertation emphasizes the *international* component of the concept, so *international students* refer to degree-seeking students who attend universities in a country different from their passport countries or high school countries. The literature review section presents a more detailed discussion on the complex definition issue of international students.

5.2 International Schools

K-12 international schools take many forms. All international schools share a characteristic that the curriculum is not of the home country (Hayden & Thompson, 2013). In the current study, the participants graduated from international schools in Asia. These international schools are accredited by the Council of International Schools, the high school curriculum is the academically rigorous International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, and the language of instruction is English. These schools primarily serve international mobile families and the local higher socioeconomic status families.

5.3 International Baccalaureate

The International Baccalaureate® (IB) is a continuum of international education through four challenging, high-quality educational programs for students aged 3 to 19. IB schools are categorized into three geographical regions: IBA (Americas); IBAEM (Africa, Europe, Middle

East); IBAP (IB Asia-Pacific). Many international schools that use the IB curriculum frequently name themselves the *IB World Schools*.

5.4 The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP)

The International Baccalaureate® Diploma Programme (*IBDP*) is the senior high school stage for students aged 16-19. The DP curriculum is made up of six subject groups and the DP core, comprising theory of knowledge (TOK), creativity, activity, service (CAS), and the extended essay (EE).

5.5 International IBDP Asian Alums

In 2021, 165,857 DP candidates participated in the examination (IB, 2021, p8). 106,766 (64.37%) of them are located in the Americas, 38,377 (23.14%) in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, and 20,714 (12.49%) in Asia-Pacific (IB Statistical Bulletin, 2021). The focus population in this dissertation is the students who attended an IBDP school in Asia and self-identify as Asians. According to the statistics, 20,714 participated in the final exam so that the research population would be one of them. The population would be further narrowed down to those who continued to pursue their higher education degree in an anglophone country.

5.6 Higher Education Institutions, Universities, and Colleges

This dissertation uses the terms interchangeably for the same post-secondary degree-granting stage. Because the study participants are in different countries, they have different colloquial and cultural preferences. *Colleges* are frequently used in the United States to describe the undergraduate degree, while *universities* are more commonly used in commonwealth nations. Student interviewees might use either term as they see fit or appropriate to their daily lives. Similarly, *higher education, post-secondary education, and tertiary education* in this dissertation all denote the same educational stage.

5.7 Global Middle Class

The term *global middle-class* bears two meanings. One is the broad definition by Kharas (2017) that estimates a whole group of people by calculating the purchasing power parity. Another proposed by Koo (2016) describes the rise of a particular segment of the middle class in developing countries.

> These people enjoy the western style of life, speak English, feel comfortable in foreign cultures, and exhibit a global orientation in their work and leisure. They form the most visible segment of the population in today's bustling Asian metropolises, and they represent the dominant trend of social and cultural change in these societies. (Koo, 2016, p.3)

The more succinct definition of the global middle class would be the "globally oriented, globally connected, and globally mobile segment of the middle class" (p.10). Throughout this dissertation, the term "global middle-class" will be used to refer to Asian students with the following features: grow up in bustling metropolises, educated in American-centric/Eurocentric high school curriculum, pursue world-class higher education in anglophone countries, exhibit a global orientation, and represent the dominant trend of social and cultural change in their home societies.

5.8 Transitions

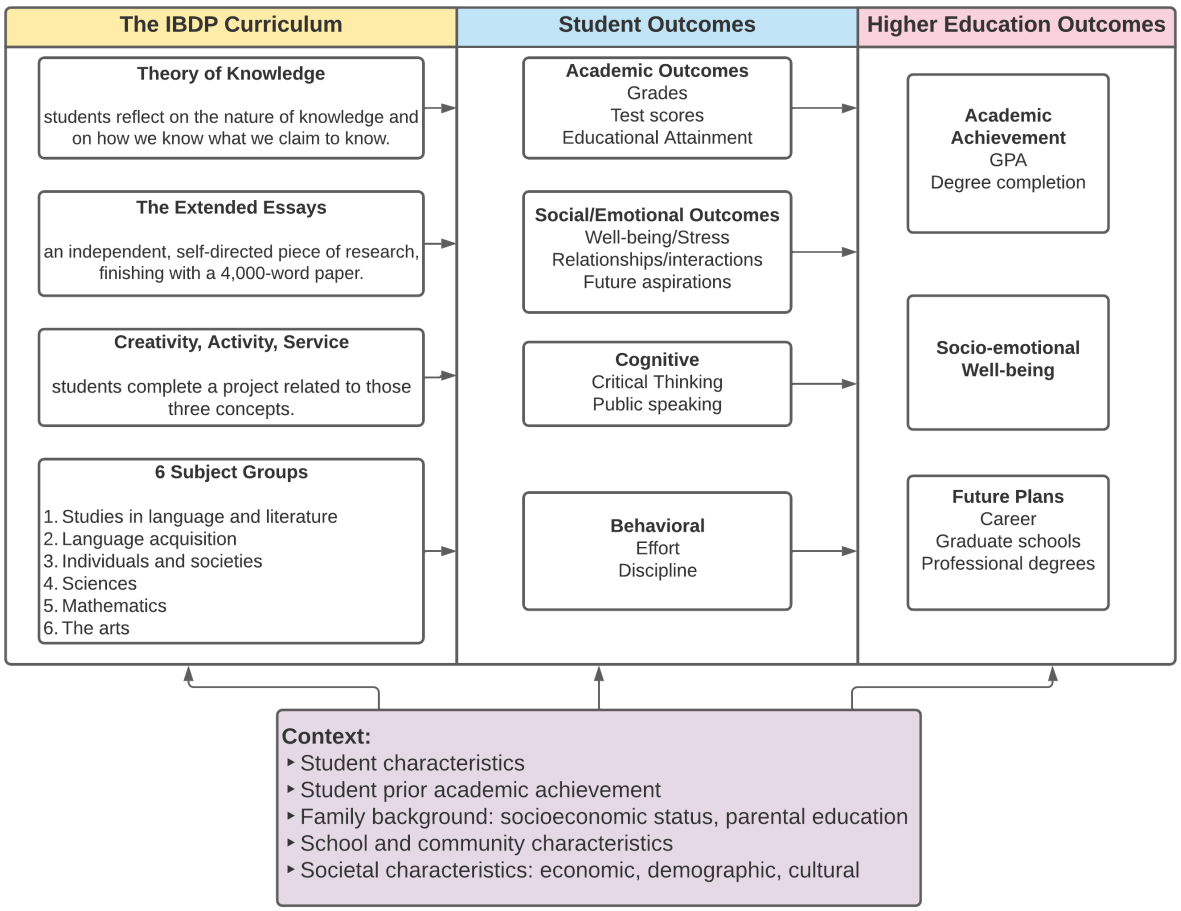
Transitions in this research describe the process of students entering universities and adjusting to the new environment. Participants were interviewed after completing at least one year of university.

6. Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

This dissertation draws on the concepts from prevalent higher education paradigms and theories on college success (Perna, 2006; Perna & Thomas, 2008). The conceptual framework is

adapted to suit the transnational student movement context (Figure 1-1). One advantage of this conceptual framework is that it details student educational experiences through the traditional sociological lens that categorizes human, social, and economic capital. An additional advantage is that this logic model articulates the student outcome pathways through which the international school impacts and connects to higher education outcomes. This framework helps visualize factors shaping student experiences, challenges, and growth.

Figure 1-1. *Conceptual Framework*



The sociological perspective offers additional theoretical insight for this dissertation. Bourdieu's (1986) theory on social reproduction and social capital, cultural capital, and economic capital suggests that international schools are a special habitus that helps form the identities of international school students. Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as the sum of

resources that one obtains through social networks; cultural capital can be attained and transmitted through language skills, cultural knowledge, and mannerisms associated with class status (Bourdieu, 1986). International schools are high-tuition private schools in Asia, and international students who go on to attend college in English-speaking countries typically need to pay full university tuition, indicating that these students come from families with certain economic capitals.

On the other hand, this set of theories does not directly explain what happens to students in the international higher education sphere. In theory, international students new to a habitus might gradually adapt and acquire the capital but would differ in many ways from domestic students. When students come from new middle- or upper-class families, it is possible that their parents and previous network might not possess the knowledge of how to acquire local capital in the host countries. One reason is that the massification of higher education in developing countries is only recent, meaning that only a small proportion of the last generation has acquired higher education. In current U.S. higher education studies, these international students might be "first-generation" students in a double sense: their parents did not receive higher education at home or abroad. It would present a challenge in understanding the local habitus and hidden curriculum.

7. Significance of the Study

This dissertation adopts a critical view to examine this important population in the international education field. Internationalization of higher education and international school research developed in the field of practice as a secondary concern in a profession that serves international students and scholars (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). The literature has largely failed to question "economic competitiveness" and "national security" discourses (p.688). Through this

study, I hope to enrich understanding of this population, whether they are termed as Asian international students, the globally mobile young adults, or the global middle class.

Secondly, by examining the experiences of this group of students, this study hopes to understand what other challenges exist in the international education pathways and whether Asian international students who received IBDP education still perceive language and culture as challenges during university transitions. Familiarity with the English language and western culture implies that this group of students may have a better starting point. The case of IB graduates, who grow up in linguistically and culturally diverse environments, might differ from other college international students new to another country. As such, their experiences could illustrate different types of challenges and even offer transferrable value to other mobile student populations.

8. Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

I aim to thoroughly understand the potential uncertainties and implications of knowledge creation and contribution (Lingard, 2015). A few limitations bound the scope of the study. After receiving Boston College's IBR approval in March 2022, I recruited and interviewed participants in the spring and summer of 2022, analyzed data in the fall semester of 2022, and finished writing the findings in January 2023. Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, I could not physically join the research population, observe them, or use an ethnographic data collection approach. I had to utilize online platforms to engage and communicate with my research participants, which presented potential challenges of trust and comfort.

As a result, I see the following limitations with this dissertation. The first limitation stems from the research method: the qualitative methodology focusing on one group of students cannot be generalized to a larger population. For grounded theory, data is constructed by the researcher

and the participants. So it is possible that different outcomes would emerge with different researchers and participants. The second limitation would be selection bias. The research participants might somehow differ from those who do not respond to the call for participants if they have different identities and dispositions that would affect the outcome. I included many steps in the research design to ensure that these limitations do not undermine this dissertation. Detailed documentation, member checks, and transcript reviews are used to infer rich and high-quality findings from the data grounded in students' experiences.

I have a few assumptions derived from the academic literature and personal experiences. Firstly, while sometimes terming the research population as "middle-class," it is possible that the group contains students from different segments of the middle class and even the upper class of their societies. Their financial and economic circumstances might differ, affecting their social and career opportunities and choices. Secondly, the literature suggests that the students might face less acculturation and linguistic stress if educated in international schools and environments. However, it is also likely that they would face different sets of challenges as their habitus change. Similarly, as the literature suggests about the features of "third-cultural kids," the global mobile students might experience similar adaptation, assimilation, and restlessness patterns. So I had to pay close attention when conducting interviews and analyzing data.

9. Researcher Positionality

My past educational and work experiences have shaped my understanding of the world and contributed to my interest and devotion to understanding this research population. Central to my interests is how young people of different linguistic, cultural, social, economic, and ideological backgrounds experience education as they move across borders to study and live.

This population, in many ways, shares similar social and cultural identity development with my friends, classmates, peers, students, and myself.

I always knew my parents wished me to obtain a higher education degree abroad that would open doors for the future. Although having limited knowledge of a western higher education, they diligently worked and saved money for this plan. I was sent to a local private school that offered the British A-Level curriculum program for the first time and the teachers were new to non-domestic education system. I applied to and received my past degrees from a liberal arts institution in the U.S. and then private research institutions in the U.S. and the U.K. I, too, had limited understanding of what this education path would lead to because no family members or acquaintances have gone through this process.

When I returned to China, I became an international school subject teacher in Beijing because I enjoyed sharing knowledge and communicating with young students. As an educator, I taught, supervised, and counseled high school students who aspired to obtain higher education abroad. Through my interactions with the school administrators, teachers, and students, I began to reflect on the meaning of this unique educational experience for students. Even with international school preparation and fluent English, my students would encounter various adjustment difficulties – just as my peers and I experienced. The adjustment and acculturation challenges are common among international students, especially from Asian cultures. These questions drove me to explore the factors impeding and promoting international students' college transition and identity development. Therefore, I decided to pursue a doctoral study, with the hope to receive rigorous academic training so I could find possible answers to improve student experiences.

10. Organization of the Study

The structure of this dissertation takes the form of seven chapters. This first chapter attempts to contextualize the research by providing background information and establishing the importance of the topic on the international transition experiences of Asian students. The second chapter reviews literature relevant to the subjects, theories, and research designs. The third chapter concerns the methodology employed for this investigation by describing my paradigm, research procedures, and methods. Chapters Four to Six are the findings chapters. Chapter Four presents and analyzes the secondary data. Chapter Five moves on to address the principal findings and presents a theoretical model of Successful International University Transitions. Chapter Six offers a theoretically oriented analysis, using a narrative approach to discuss the typology and heterogeneity in individual experiences. Chapter Seven summarizes the study, draws together various theoretical and empirical strands of this dissertation, discusses the implications and applications, and suggests future research directions.

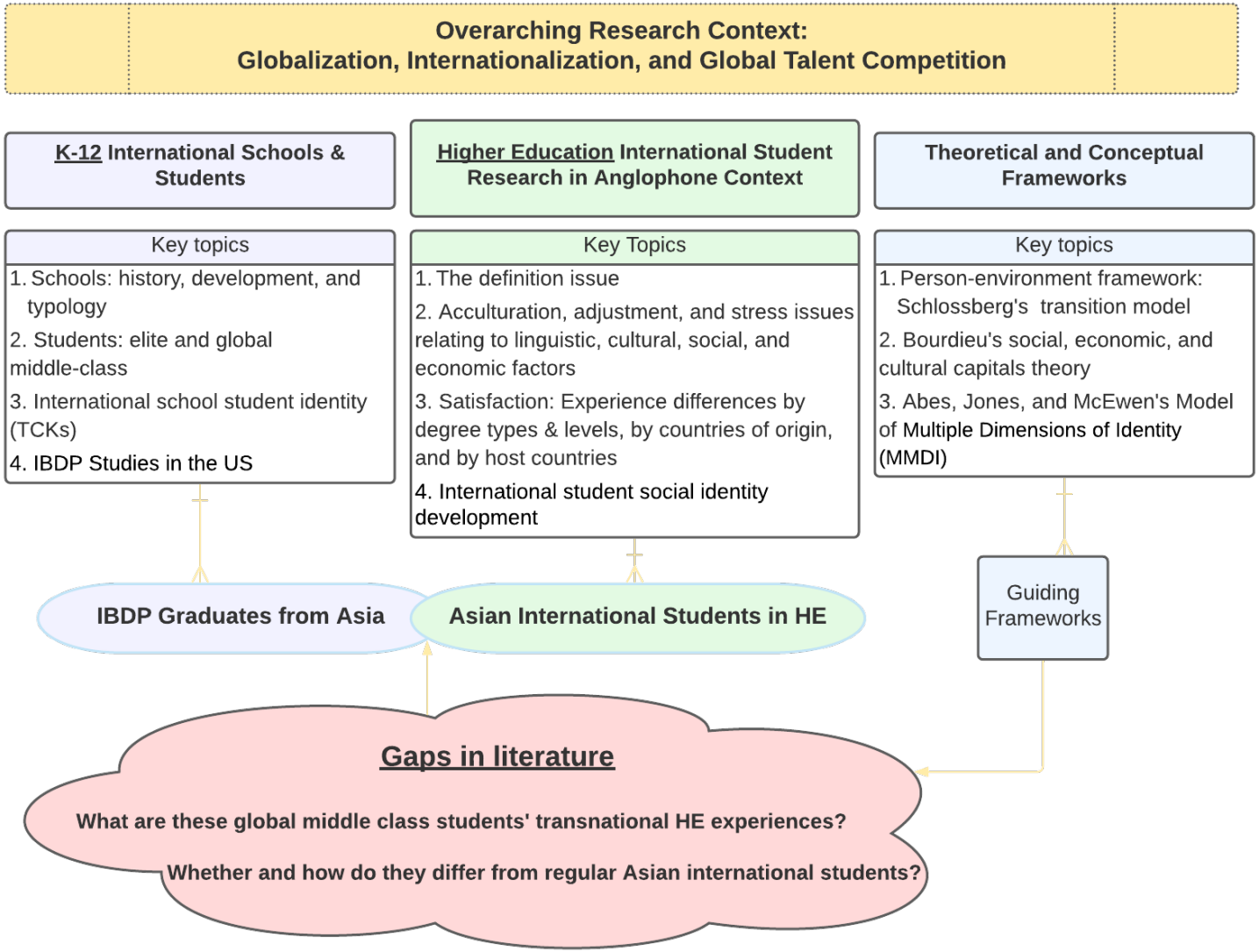
Chapter Two: Literature Review

After the first chapter establishes the context, background, and importance of the topic on the transnational experiences of IB graduates from Asia, this second chapter reviews critical literature. Although there are relatively few studies directly focusing on this specific student population, four groups of studies shed light on understanding their experiences:

1. The key topics and theories within the research contexts: globalization, internationalization of education, and international education;
2. Past studies on international secondary schools, IBDP schools, and IBDP students;
3. Research on international student mobility and experiences in predominantly anglophone countries, with particular attention on acculturation and adjustment issues; and
4. The most frequently applied theoretical and conceptual frameworks in researching international students.

In the following sections, I will summarize and explain how these prior studies informed this dissertation. Because I aimed to include a vast amount of studies in this chapter, I designed a literature review concept map to visualize the chapter structure. Figure 2-1. Literature Review Concept Map provides road map to reading the following main sections.

Figure 2-1. *Literature Review Concept Map*



1.1 Globalization, Internationalization of Higher Education, and Transnational Mobilities

This dissertation situates the study on international student experiences within the international higher education studies field. Therefore, it is important to understand the overarching theme of globalization and the internationalization of higher education that impact the population in international education. *Globalization* has been defined as the broad economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement (Altbach & Knight, 2007). *Globalization* also means "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens, quoted in Arnove, 2013, p.1).

On the other hand, *Internationalization* relates to choices and decisions undertaken by academic systems and institutions, and even individual departments to facilitate student or faculty exchanges, engage in collaborative research overseas, offer academic programs in English (or other languages), or a myriad of other actions (Altbach, 2016, p.84). Internationalization of higher education developed in the field of practice, "generally as a secondary concern in a profession mainly concerned with services to incoming and outgoing international students and scholars" (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). As the audience primarily had been professionals and administrators in the field, the literature largely failed to question "economic competitiveness" and "national security" discourses (p.688). Most recently, de Wit et al. (2015) put forth the normative definition for internationalization of higher education as:

> The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. (p.29)

To achieve a comprehensive internationalization, the American Council on Education (ACE) Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE) mapped out six pillars:

> articulated institutional commitment; administrative leadership, structure, and staffing; curriculum, co-curriculum, and learning outcomes; faculty policies and practices; collaboration and partnership; and student mobility. (Helms et al., 2017, p.2)

This set of strategies was developed from Knight's (2012) categorization of internationalization "abroad" and "at home." The former refers to the mobility and movement of people, programs, providers, policies, knowledge, projects, and services across national boundaries, while the latter refers to campus-based strategies. Internationalization at Home (IaH) includes the intercultural and international dimension in the teaching and learning, research, extracurricular activities, relationship with the local cultural and ethnic community, and integration of international students and scholars into the campus life and activities (Knight, 2012).

Here, student mobility is considered a foundation of how the internationalization of higher education is understood because it is tangible and an easily recognized aspect by relevant stakeholders (Rumbley et al., 2012). International student mobility and recruitment are the outcomes of globalization of education and institutional internationalization policies. International students bear the duality of "studying abroad" while being part of the "at home" internationalization for the institutional campus environment. At the same time, globally mobile students' choices, experiences, and self-interpretations are within the interactive process of "global and local dialectic" (Arnove, 2013, p.1). Studying this population could add knowledge to the evolving "dialectic" corresponding to ongoing economic, social, and educational changes.

There are four dominant theoretical perspectives concerning globalization and education: world culture, world systems, postcolonial, and culturalist. Besides the world culture theories, the other three interpretations sometimes overlap with regard to world knowledge and power analysis (Spring, 2008). Further, each perspectives explain the underlying causes and processes for globalization and education differently, whether it is to view globalization as a conflict (the world system analysis/neo-Marxist), as culture (world culture theory/neo-institutionalist), or as competition (neoliberalism) (Shields, 2013). Currently, there are quite a few existing main discourses in the global education field: knowledge economy and technology, lifelong learning, global migration or brain circulation, neoliberalism, multiculturalism, and the role of English (Spring, 2008).

From the global migration perspective, Findlay (2011) pointed out the changing characteristics of international student mobility using social demand theories and supply theories. The power of social and cultural capital drives middle class families to seek to get their children into the best western universities. The supply-side theories argued that the global flow of students is powered to a large extent by the financial interests of those who can supply elite higher education opportunities to a world market. Rizvi (2011) discussed this phenomenon both as an expression of and response to the contemporary processes of globalization. Under this context, he suggests that international mobility for education has become a marker of success and social status.

2. International Schools and Students

2.1 International Schools and IBDP

Similar to the trajectory of the internationalization of higher education research, international school research evolved from the field of practice (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). Much

of the greater part of the literature on international schools seek to define the type and purpose and still lacks clarity because of the evolving nature of these expanding institutions worldwide. Since the 1980s, scholars from the University of Bath, led by Mary Hayden and Jeff Thompson, have been the primary force to examine the history, typology, and development of international schools. In their most cited work, Hayden and Thompson (2013) categorized international schools into three main groups: traditional, ideological, and non-traditional (see Table 2-1 for a detailed presentation). They argued the only characteristics that all these institutions share is "that the curriculum offered is not of the home country (p.9)" and "the demand for English-medium international schools offering a 'Western' form of education to the host country socioeconomically advantaged will continue to grow strongly" (p.15).

Table 2-1. *Hayden & Thompson's 2013 Typology for International Schools*

Type A	Traditional	Established principally to cater for globally mobile expatriate families for whom the local education system is not considered appropriate
Type B	Ideological	Established principally on an ideological basis, bringing together young people from different parts of the world to be educated together with a view to promoting global peace and understanding
Type C	Non-traditional	Established principally to cater for 'host country nationals' – the socioeconomically advantaged elite of the host country who seek for their children a form of education different from, and perceived to be of higher quality than, that available in the national education system

Note: compiled by the author from Hayden & Thompson (2013, p.5)

Another definition is also frequently cited and used by researchers (see Cruz, 2018; Bunnell et al., 2016), as stated by an international schools consulting firm:

> If the school delivers a curriculum to any combination of pre-school, primary or secondary students, wholly or partly in English outside an English-speaking country, or, if a school is in a country where English is one of the official languages, it offers an English-medium curriculum other than the country's national curriculum and the school is international in its orientation. (ISC research, 2021)

Using this categorization, the number of international schools and enrolled students is growing at a fast speed. In 2021, over 12,000 international schools teach over 6 million students worldwide, with approximately 80% are now children of local families attending an international school in their native country (ISC Research, 2021).

The study on international schools and international school graduates can lead to conceptual challenges. This is because we all perceive and understand "international" differently. When we speak of international schools, there are a wide range of international schools delivering educational programs, including the A-levels, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. The schools offering those programs also diverge in types. The "traditional" type was first established in 1924, with ties of League of Nations, the International Schools of Geneva and Yokohama (Bunnell, 2021). These schools set the foundation for the Geneva-registered International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). Now IBDP has gained worldwide recognition and is ran by the official international organization International Baccalaureate (IB). In addition, many international schools are named as the American, Canadian, British, German, and Japanese schools of their city locations, offering their home country curriculum to expatriates and diplomatic families.

Increasingly, prestigious English private schools have been opening overseas franchised branches or "satellite colleges" in other countries. For example, those schools include the Dulwich College, Harrow School, and Eton College. They are expanding in China, Singapore,

Japan, South Korea, and even in Myanmar. Other types included the “Chinese Internationalized Schools”, either as private schools or with affiliation with local public schools. It has been argued that the delivery of the IBDP is seen as crucial to the concept of “Elite (maybe not traditional) International School” (Bunnell, 2021). Some IB schools are truly internationals schools, with the characteristics of having international diverse teachers and diverse student bodies. On the other hand of the spectrum, there are schools that are newly adopting the IBDP for their students.

While English-medium education is a key feature shared among various international schools, there are different forms of “western” education that international schools use. It is this feature that makes the research into the international schools and their population ambiguous and complicated. Depending on a school’s origin and affiliation, it may use the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP), the British A-Level, American Advanced Placement (AP), and Canadian curricula; or provide these curricula in combination.

Even for schools offering the same curricula, there exist differences in their organization, funding, and population. In the case of IB World Schools, many countries in Europe, North America and South America have allowed IB’s integration and accreditation into the public-school systems. IBDP World Schools in the US are branded to support under-served communities with state funding (IB, 2013, as cited in Wright and Lee, 2014, p.5). IB schools in Chicago (US) incorporated IBDP into public schooling through state funding, serving the underprivileged local population. In 2006, The Ministry of Education of Ecuador signed an agreement to gradually introduce IBDP into the country’s 1400 publicly funded secondary schools as a way of addressing inequality. They are regarded as only IB local schools rather than strictly international schools. In other countries, IB schools are mostly private and serve affluent

local elites or mobile families (Dvir et al., 2018). Some IB programs are offered in bilingual schools, which offer education in the local language in combination with a foreign language (mostly but not exclusively English).

2.2 International School Population and the Global Middle Class

Although there are a few countries that have begun to integrate IB curriculum into the public-school systems, international secondary education programs remain elitist and predominantly private due to its high cost and rigor. The families and students that could afford an expensive and challenging curriculum come from middle class, upper-middle class, and elite social classes. As a result, many studies, frequently from sociology field, have examined the international school population using the term "global middle class" or "cosmopolitan middle class".

Current scholars at the University of Bath (Tristin Bunnell), Beijing Foreign Studies University (Adam Pool), The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Aaron Koh), Tel Aviv University (Miri Yemini), and the Institute of Education at UCL (Claire Maxwell) have been producing prolific studies on international schools. Their work frequently appears in individual international education handbooks or journals focusing on globalization, namely *Globalization, Societies, and Education*, *Journal of Research in International Education*, and *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. Due to the rapid growth of the international school sector, their research discusses how to categorize international schools as schools develop and take on new forms (see, for instance, Bunnell et al., 2016).

Additionally, they have examined the schools and the various components within the school system, such as the administration, staff, teachers, parents, and students. Frequently used theoretical approaches include Bourdieu's theories of class reproduction, habitus, and social,

economic, and social capitals. Corresponding with the sociological theoretical frameworks, "global elites," "emerging global class," "global middle class," "transnational social class," and "citizen of nowhere/anywhere" are the central themes (see, e.g., Bunnell, 2021; Lillie, 2021; Sklair, 2001). They studied the mechanisms through which international schools become the result of globalization, neoliberalism, marketization, mobility; as well as how schools are the maker of the global elite class and middle class (Beech et al., 2021; Howard & Maxwell, 2021; Kenway et al., 2017; Yemini & Maxwell, 2018).

Scholars have also sought to explain international school dynamics in a wide range of regions, not surprisingly in international megacities and/or emerging economies. Many of the enrolled students are from expatriates' families, and their parents are employees of multi-national educational institutions. Attending international schools allows them to be easily repatriated into the national labor market (Bunnell et al., 2021). A diverse supply of international schools also allowed affluent local families to choose alternative future education pathways. Frequently studied regions include China (Liu, 2020; Poole, 2020; Wu & Koh, 2021; Wright et al., 2021), Israel (Yemini et al., 2015), South Korea (Song, 2013), and East Asia in general (Kim, 2019).

However, the term "global middle class" is often used without clear definitions. As Koo (2016) summarized, the term is either broadly used to refer to the sum of all the middle classes that exist in the world today or refers to "only the upper segments of the middle classes in developing countries, whose members are affluent and globally oriented in their lifestyle and mobility patterns" (p.2). Koo's article argued that while the most distinctive feature about the global orientation of the global middle class is not the consumption pattern or lifestyle of the affluent middle class, but "its members' global or cosmopolitan strategy of education for their

children, a strategy that requires a good knowledge of the global opportunity structure and an ability to exploit it for their own and their children's benefits (p10)".

In Wright & Lee's (2019) study, IBDP alumni in world-class Hong Kong universities viewed themselves as a distinctive population with "positional advantages with both the hard currency of academic credentials and soft currency of cosmopolitan sensibilities" (p.12). Their study also demonstrated that IBDP schooling is "an emerging educational pathway for upper-middle-class families to navigate access to mobile professional and managerial careers in East Asia" (p.11). The authors found that students lack a sense of belonging to both localized affairs, culture, language, and even a social divide with local students. Their research population consisted of IB alumni of different countries in Hong Kong, and not strictly "international students" by definition, but such lack of engagement applies to local Hong Kong IBDP alumni as well. This identity separation might apply to the case of IB international students studying abroad and perhaps even exacerbate it.

2.3 The TCK population

In addition to using "class" as a marker to categorize the international school population, another term that frequently used to describe the student population is *Global Nomads* or *Third Culture Kids* (TCKs) (Grimshaw & Sears (2008); Hayden, 2006). A TCK has been defined as:

> A person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture(s). Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar backgrounds (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001, p.19).

At a glance, this definition might imply that other cross-cultural groups could be considered TCKs. Van Reken differentiated TCKs from other groups, such as children of refugees, children of immigrants, and international adoptees, that might fit the above definition

in some ways, with a table on the website for reader's reference (See Van Reken, n.d). Key distinctions between these groups include anticipated repatriation, organizational system identity associated with the sponsoring agency or corporation, and certain "status" linked to the parent's career.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001) described TCKs as "cultural chameleons," as "after spending a little time observing what is going on, they can easily switch language, style of relating, appearance, and cultural practices to take on the characteristics needed to blend better into the current scene" (p.53). On the other hand, TCKs face issues of integration with their peers. Sociologist Ruth Useem and her team from Michigan State University conducted a survey of 680 American adult TCKs. They found that despite the expected academic success, the majority of the TCKs reported being different from their peer group (Useem & Downie, 1976).

Outlining the key issues facing TCKs, such as transition and English and native language conflict, Hayden called for a greater understanding of how this group could be best supported during their school years and the long-term effects of how they transition into adulthood (2006, p.72). TCKs are privileged materially, socially (in terms of social and communication skills developed), and educationally (through first-hand experiences of history, geography, religion, languages, and cultures that other children might learn about only through books or the internet (Hayden, 2006).

Although research on TCKs is growing, it is not as practical or valuable to categorize all international school students as TCKs. As pointed out above, increasingly, host country nationals enroll their children in international schools to seek alternative K-12 education than the national education. Such phenomenon occurs most frequently in Type C schools, but also in Type A schools. Moreover, most research on TCKs focused on the K-12 level. But limited research has

tried to understand the students who graduated from international schools and their transition into college.

To conclude this section, although international schools are not the central focus, or the unit of analysis, of my planned dissertation, the above studies shed important light on K-12 international education and their students. The typology informs my understanding of the nuances within different types and curricula. The sociology studies further paint a vivid picture of the diverse, though small in numbers, population that the schools serve and their varied aspirations and rationales. It has been pointed out by review authors that most studies on IB education rely on participant perceptions, and few measure the impacts using experimental, observational, or longitudinal designs to evaluate co-variates (Dickson et al., 2018; Park et al., 2014). My dissertation wishes to pinpoint the student population who are linguistically and culturally diverse, as they are educated in the anglophone curriculum and surrounded by peers of different races and nationalities. Understanding the typology, I would seek out students who graduated from the "traditional" and "ideological" schools located outside of the anglophone countries. Further, I will need to pay close attention to whether the transition experiences differ by TCKs and non-TCKs.

2.4 IBDP Studies and Higher Education

One bifurcation on international school research focuses on IBDP schools in the U.S. and their graduates who proceeded into U.S colleges, many stem from doctoral dissertation studies. This group of studies suggests that alternative and more rigorous school options prepare U.S. students for better college experiences. Because the authors are often associated with the IB organization or IBDP schools, the research outcomes seemed overwhelmingly positive on IBDP and the extent to which it prepares students in college (see, for instance, Hixon, 2017). Parents

and students perceive IBDP as a good pathway into prestigious colleges because of its high recognition and preparation for post-secondary education (Hertberg-Davis & Callahan, 2008).

Culross and Tarvers' 2011 survey on 28 alumni's perceived benefits includes international cultural awareness, creative and critical thinking skills, breadth and depth of knowledge, oral and written communication skills. Their results showed a neutral impact on "study habits, organizational skills, or time management" (p.237). Similar effects and benefits to higher education were found through the survey of 15 alumni from a district in Canada (Taylor & Porath, 2006). Bergeron (2015) and Dueval (1999) found IB alumni had higher rates of 1) immediately enrolling in higher education, 2) the first year retaining rate, and 3) earning bachelor's degrees within five years, as compared to their non-IB peers. Controlling for student academic and socioeconomic background, Shal et al. (2010) found a positive relationship between IB participation and college performance for IB graduates, compared to non-IB students in the University of California system.

The interview data from the above study showed positive outcomes; other studies cast some doubts. For example, Perna et al. (2015) examined data from both U.S national data on school characteristics and from Florida IBDP coordinators on student characteristics. While this research aimed to showcase that the access to IBDP is limited for the underrepresented population in the U.S., the studies "lack school- and student-level data describing the extent to which IBDP students of different groups receive diplomas and certificates of are academically ready for college" (p.419).

Despite the growing literature on IB schools, there are limited rigorous reviews on the school to university transitions or the effect of IB programs in the non-English speaking context. To date, there is only one scoping thematic review on the impact of IB education on teaching and

learning, which focuses on the school years before high school (Dickson et al., 2018). In their university section, the authors point out the perceived benefits to higher education from the perspectives of students, teachers, and university administrators, summarizing studies from the Americas (p.3). Jaafar et al. (2021) conducted a bibliometric study and found that 80% of the IB literature emerged in the past ten years, and 56% of the publications are from the US, the UK, and Australia (p.5). They identified three critical conceptual clusters in the IB research field: growing the IB brand (legitimacy and advantages), student success for the IB (well-being, advancement, and achievement), and the international identity of IB (international-mindedness and global citizenship) (p.5). Yet, there remains room to understand how IB prepares students for higher education in other contexts.

My colleagues Tessa DeLaquil, Megan Collier, Hans de Wit, and I conducted a rigorous review study that uses explicit, prespecified scientific methods to identify, select, assess, and summarize the findings of higher education outcomes from the IB literature. Our review paper applied the PEO framework (Population, Exposure, and Outcome) (Wang et al., under review). This framework is best suited to determine whether and to what degree the relationship existed between variables in a specified context (Munn et al., 2018). The *target population* was students from a non-Anglophone context; the *exposure* was the IBDP education, and the *outcome* was higher education access, transition, and experiences.

Our preliminary findings show that all the studies included college preparation as one of the examined outcomes. The constructs were framed in the languages of college "acceptance," "admission," "readiness," and/or "preparation." Studies demonstrated that DP students were accepted into elite or well-regarded universities (Belal, 2015; Wright & Lee, 2020; Saavedra et al., 2016).

Once students enter universities, interview data indicated that DP students perceived that they were well-prepared for university, especially in essays and group projects (Belal, 2015; Wright & Lee, 2020). DP graduates are shown to have accumulated other valuable skills and university entry and performance. In addition to academic skills and performance, studies also probe into other skills. Frequently mentioned topics include DP graduates' time management, stress management, and interpersonal communications abilities.

The theme of privilege remained constant throughout all studies. A growing literature has been delving into specific development in different countries. In Wright and Lee's (2014) study, they argued that IBDP is accessible to a small minority of the population in China due to the non-citizenship status and high tuition fees, and students would have limited opportunities to encounter and interact with people of other cultures and socio-economic groups within Chinese societies. They further pointed out that despite many students being of local Chinese heritage, the lack of opportunities to interact with local populations would imply that inter-cultural understanding goals would not be easily achieved and potentially damage social tolerance and cohesion (pp.153-154).

3. International Student Research in Anglophone Higher Education

In this third section of the literature review, I now move from the left side of the K12 studies to the right side of higher education studies on the Figure 2-1. *Literature Review Concept Map*. I focus on international student mobility and prevalent themes in international students in higher education. For the former, I outline only the key issues here to avoid repetition in content because I recently contributed a literature review chapter on national and institutional level international student recruitment practices, student mobility patterns, and push-and-pull factors (Wang, 2022). In this dissertation, I review student-level literature mainly.

3.1 The Definition Issue

In international student mobility literature, the foremost discussion focuses on defining what an *international student* is due to changing forms and modes of education delivery. Data sources from various international organizations also diverge in their definitions, thus collecting and calculating international student numbers differently (de Wit et al., 2022). In recruitment literature, international students generally refer to *inbound degree-seeking* international students, although inbound credit-seeking, certificate, and virtually mobile students may also be included in various data and policies. The degree-seeking students are the focus population of my dissertation.

Internationally mobile students typically describe a non-resident visa status (sometimes called a student visa) to pursue a tertiary degree (or higher) in the destination country. Since 2015, UNESCO, OECD, and EUROSTAT, the European Union's statistical office, have agreed upon a definition of *internationally mobile students*: Students who have crossed a national or territorial border for education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin (UNESCO Institute for Statistics).

A broad definition tends to neglect the complexity of developments in mobility. As de Wit (2008) explained, the term *international student* might be the most expedient in the present context of international higher education, "not so much describing students' movement across borders, but the fact that the content, the mode of delivery, and the provider have become more and more international" (p.17).

In the case of international school graduates, the issue becomes further complicated because of the citizenship issue. Students who graduated from international schools in non-anglophone countries are likely to pursue higher education in anglophone countries, regardless of

their citizenship status. Thus, for example, I should not choose to interview U.S citizens who graduated from international high schools outside of the U.S. and then proceeded to U.S. colleges. They would be an interesting subject to study, but because they will not be counted as international students, this population will not be appropriate to be my sample population. My dissertation positions international students according to Carroll's (2015) definition: students who, in nature, are linguistically and culturally diverse human beings moving across borders. This definition is more holistic in capturing the diverse strengths and agency among students.

3.2 International Mobility Literature

Rich literature has examined the international education and mobility. What do they imply about the globally mobile international school students?

Looking at international student mobility from a high-level perspective, Rahul Choudaha (2017) conceptualized and categorized mobility from 1999 to 2020 into three waves. Choudaha stated that the first wave (1999-2006) was characterized by the need for highly skilled workers, so students studied abroad to gain economic rewards and institutions attracted students with fundings in pursuit of research excellence (p.826). The second wave (2006-2013) overlapped with the global financial crisis, and as a result, higher institutions were defunded and recruited fee-paying international students, primarily from self-funded and government-funded students, including China, South Korea, India, Saudi Arabia (p.828). According to Choudaha, the third wave (2013-2020) would see mobilities shaped by China's economic slowdown, UK's Brexit, and USA's anti-immigration policies, which together affects student flows and decisions. Although being quite broad and general, Choudaha's predications on international mobilities based on demographic shifts, economic priorities, and political turbulence largely remains accurate today.

Writing from the human geography angle, many scholars have examined the process and impact of international education and mobility. In the sociological canon, "mobility" often refers to "social mobility", meaning how individuals move up or down in the hierarchical socioeconomic classes "and to the collective positional movement of social groups or classes" (Sheller, 2014, p.791). Waters (2006; 2012) also pointed out how many scholarships conceptualized the advantages of accumulating international education in Bourdieu's terms, including embodied and institutionalized capitals, while entrenches social inequalities. Increasingly research have explored students' differentiated experiences: how students gained social advantages and constructed a cosmopolitan identity, and their disadvantages and vulnerabilities.

These geography scholars also tried to theorize international student migration. Holton and Riley (2013) argued that more remains to be explored on "how the international migration of students ties into the discussions of more local geographies of HE students, particularly regarding how international students both utilise and experience studentified spaces" (p.65). Raghuram (2013) argued that there exists a distinctive space for analyzing student migrant and their multiple identities, as "workers (present or nascent), family members, political actors, and so on" (p.149). They believed that mobility for education should be understood in the context of mobile careers, mobile lives, family formation, and knowledge production and circulation, rather than isolated moments that students gain capital for employability (Findlay et al., 2012; Madge et al., 2013). This is a point that I quite agree and also argued for in my study.

Related area of research situates "youth mobility" in migration and development and transnational migration studies. For example, Reynolds and Zontini (2016) researched the multiple mobilities that migrant youths face in complex transnational fields. They stressed the

importance for future research to understand how intersectionality shapes migrant youth's transnational and diasporic identities. Their earlier study (2013) pointed out how for migrant youth, transnational practices were part of the family habitus. This contains a structured set of values and ways of thinking through family socialization of cultural and transitions, reflect families' social networks and resources (economic, social, and cultural). These findings also align closely with my study by considering the family circumstance and environment that students grew up in.

Robertson et al. (2018) rightly pointed out that many studies rely on "bounded typologies" (e.g. "second generation, temporary") or a "fixed sense of motivations" (e.g. "labor migration", "lifestyle motivation"). This limits the "conceptual capacity to capture the complexity and connections in the various and often overlapping forms of young people's transnational mobility" (p.6). It is thus important to understand how diverse statuses, motivations, intentions and outcomes can exist contemporaneously and change over time (Robertson et al., 2018). This is exactly the issue facing the international school population because they embody and reflect the multiplicity.

Drawing on works in youth studies and migration studies, Robertson et al. (2018) advocated for a "mobile transition" framework to study transnational youth mobility: first with a focus on multiplicities, in terms of categories, directionalities, spaces, cultures, and temporalities. Second, they suggested using three intersecting domains: economic opportunities, social relations, and civic practices. This is a very good point to understand youth transition in a spatio-temporal context. Paul and Yeoh (2021) used a broad umbrella term "multinational migrations" to describe "the movements of international migrants across more than one overseas destination with significant time spent in each overseas country" (p.5). They rightly recognize that the lack

of consensus over the best terminology to describe these migrants "is indicative of a lack of theoretical clarity on this emergent phenomenon" (p.5).

In these human geography studies, the term "migrants" or "migrant youths" do not comprehensively describe the experiences of international school alums. But it is very useful to conceptualize my study using the human geographer's theories. In particular, their work adds an interesting life experience dimension to the studies that solely focus on the "educational experience". It is also important to analyze internationally mobile students' relationships and their expression of identities. The next section will turn to the largest group of literature, which specifically looks at international student experience in higher education.

3.3 Reviews on International Student Literature

A considerable amount of literature has been published on international student mobility and educational experiences. Several recent studies have begun to systematically map and evaluate what has been found. For example, Jing et al. (2020) reviewed 3,685 journal articles and revealed that studies in the field increased rapidly since 2006, primarily in the USA, Australia, and the U.K. It is no surprise because these countries are the top international student destinations and English-speaking nations and have high-yielding institutions and academic journals. They also identified five groups of central themes in international student research: cross-cultural adjustment (transition/acculturation/adaptation), mental health problems (stress/depression), second-language acquisition, intercultural development (competency), and student migration (labor market/push-pull factors).

Similar to systematically analyzing the content and themes, bibliometric analysis on existing knowledge of international student mobility corroborated the above study. Gümüş et al. (2020) pointed out that the socio-cultural, academic, and emotional well-being and adjustment

literature is often focused on long-term or degree-pursuing students, with keywords such as "Chinese students, Malaysia, Australia, and Asian international students" (p.509). This finding again demonstrated how international students from Asia who pursue a higher education degree overseas have been an important scholarly focus. On the other hand, "study abroad" implies short-term mobility. The keywords are "Spanish, French, Arabic, and Erasmus," and the main research focuses are "language, learning, and intercultural competence" (pp. 509-510).

These systematic review studies are helpful because they offer an analytical overview and development of our field. Next, I will turn to individual studies to better identify narrower topics. I will focus on topics that pertain to my research question and research population.

3.4 Acculturation, Adjustment, and Stress

The socio-cultural and emotional well-being adjustment and adaptation have been a central focus in international student literature. The language barrier impacts both academic performance and interpersonal interactions; educational stressors, sociocultural stressors, discriminations, practical stressors could all affect students' psychological adaptation and adjustment (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; de Araujo, 2011). Furthermore, Mesidor and Sly (2016) found that early life experiences, resilience, self-efficacy, spiritual, social support, coping style, personality, emotional and cultural intelligence are critical factors impacting on student adjustment.

Acculturation is another frequently studied topics relating to international students transitioning into another place and culture. Acculturation is commonly understood as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that occurs as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their members" (Berry, 2005, p. 698). Aljaberi et al. (2020) examined the effectiveness of interventional programs that reduce acculturation stress and enhance

adjustment for international students new to an environment. Their systematically review analysis included studies that used randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental trials. They found that acculturative stress is associated with "feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, and physical illness…because of the lack of social support, communication problems, and homesickness (2020, p.13)".

Targeting only the socio-cultural aspects of international students' challenges is not sufficient, as the psychoeducational program is found to be the more effective method to reduce acculturative stress and enhance adjustment than cultural orientation, socio-cultural, and peer-pairing programs. Psychoeducational programs include the following: "intercultural training with psychotherapeutic techniques, cognitive-behavioral-oriented, stress inoculation treatment, the web-based intervention of culturally tailored messages based on cognitive-behavioral, problem-solving, and psychology therapies" (Aljaberi et al., 2020, pp. 16-17). The authors also suggest considering other co-variates, such as gender, ethnicity, age, educational level, and cultural backgrounds of the international students, to make the study more robust in internal validity and external validity. Because the international students are often small in numbers, it is uncommon to see studies that include the randomized control trials or detailed breakdowns on the mentioned these co-variates.

Located in the psychology discipline, Zhang and Goodson (2011) conducted a systematic review on international students' psychosocial adjustment to life in the U.S from 64 selected articles. Their review stated the main five predictors to psychological adjustments include: stress, social support, English language proficiency, region/country of origin, length of residence in the U.S., acculturation, social interaction with Americans, self-efficacy, gender, and personality. They pointed out that the importance of both micro-level and macro-level factors, such as

personal characteristics as well as campus environment. This finding is similar to studies in higher education administration and educational leadership studies. In addition, they argue for incorporating the host countries predictor "because countries differ culturally, politically, and economically collapsing predictors across host countries might be less meaningful" (p.149).

Many studies revealed the same results. In one study conducted at an urban university in the U.S., Yeh and Inose (2003) found self-reported English language fluency is a significant predictor of acculturative stress. English language fluency is an indication of whether participants are comfortable interacting with others in new cultural settings and academic settings. They showed that European students experienced less acculturative distress than students from other geographic regions, as all of their participants were racially White, which might help them to adjust better in daily interactions. They further pointed out that students from collective cultures such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America would encounter "fundamental cross-cultural differences in notions of self" (p.24).

In studies in the psychology and counseling field, it has been consistently identified that Asian American students underuse mental health services, especially among immigrants, than the U.S- born Asians (Derr, 2016). The hesitation to engage in help-seeking has been remarkable among Chinese international students, even at elite institutions such as Yale University (Han et al., 2013; Lian et al., 2020). Lian et al. (2020) surveyed 222 Chinese international students. They found that general mental health help-seeking intentions were positively associated with coping self-efficacy, social support at the undergraduate level, no history of full-time employment, and a lower level of stigma. However, the data were highly skewed towards female (65.3%) and graduate students (84.7%).

The studies from psychology and counseling field have been highly illuminating, but the methodology issues remain an issue. Research to date has been focused on a few co-variates such as nationality and gender due to the small sample size. In addition, many studies are conducted via an online convenience sampling social media campaign, thus difficult to establish casual inference and to establish generalizability. But studies on other population, such as first-year international students' college experiences, confirm the relationship between English language proficiency, acculturative stress, meaningful interpersonal relationships, and academic success (Koo et al., 2021).

3.5 International Student Satisfaction

In addition to studying adjustment, some scholars have turned to understand international student satisfaction. A good understanding of international student experience and satisfaction understanding could contribute to effective policies and practices that support a diverse student population (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Positive international student experience and satisfaction are associated with many benefits, including student retention (Schreiner, 2009), loyalty to institutions (Thomas, 2011), and higher levels of recommendation (Merola et al., 2019), which all belong to the goals of international education.

As a whole or by home country category, international students have been the research subjects across disciplines. Studies have found that international students differ from domestic students in college adjustment, satisfaction, and integration; variations also exist by nationalities, linguistic abilities, and cultural competencies (Andrade, 2006; Ammigan & Jones, 2018; Arambewela & Hall, 2007; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Roy et al., 2016).

Most research on international student experiences is qualitative because of the difficulties in categorizing international students and recruiting a large sample size. Nevertheless,

recent studies have explored quantitative statistical analysis, for example, using the *International Student Barometer* (ISB) survey from the company *i-Graduate* in the UK. ISB is distributed to worldwide institutions and international students, collecting self-reported responses on different aspects of their experiences. Ammigan and Jones (2018) evaluated 45,000 degree-seeking international students' experiences from 96 institutions in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Their focused on ISB students' reported satisfaction responses to university arrival, living, learning, and support services, and found that learning was the most important contributor. Merola, Coelen, and Hofman (2019) explored 5,242 surveys to analyze the nationality differences and found that Indian students have higher mean satisfaction than Chinese and South Korean students.

ISB stopped releasing data to researchers since 2019, but researchers proceeded with additional analysis with existing data. By examining 2,145 undergraduate international students enrolled at four home campuses and their six affiliated international branch campuses (IBCs), Merola et al. (2021) showed that international students studying at IBCs were significantly less satisfied with their academic experience. Ammigan, Dennis, and Jones (2021) examined 32,015 international student data from 10 home countries and found that students from the Asian countries (China, Hong Kong SAR, and South Korea) reported the lowest overall satisfaction.

The International Student Barometer data and the quantitative research analysis are not without limitations. For statistical validity concerns, the ISB does not provide student response rate, university characteristics (e.g., size and ranking), or total international student numbers at each university. There is no identifier for each university, making it difficult to separate cofounding factors, for example, whether student satisfaction in world-class universities differs from those in community colleges. The authors that utilize the ISB data also acknowledged these

concerns and limitations regarding generalizability, social desirability bias, and positivity bias in self-reported responses (Ammigan et al., 2021). On the other hand, through a large-scale dataset, the ISB studies offered insights into the student evaluations and satisfactions between different nationalities by host countries.

3.6 Social Identity Development

In addition to reviewing various literature on international students, I decided to take a step back to look at the concepts on college student development and social in general. Jones and Abes (2011) defined student development as "some kind of positive change [that] occurs in the student (e.g., cognitive complexity, self-awareness, racial identity, or engagement)" (p.153). In the past two decades, to enhance college students' development, higher education scholars and professionals have begun to work with students on issues of oppression, privilege, and power, while addressing the multifaceted identity issue. This development signals a shift "from the dominance of mostly positivist psychosocial and cognitive structural theories to guide student development, toward inclusion of a wider range of research methods and social science disciplines, such as sociology and developmental ecology" (Patton et al., 2016, p.75).

Identity, through an integrative view, can be understood in four levels: individual, relational, collective, and material (Vignoles et al., 2011). Individual or personal identities are self-definitions at the individual level, including goals, values, beliefs, and other individually held self-evaluations and expected future selves (p.3). Relational identities include roles (for example, child, student, roommate) that one establishes in relationship with and to others, in the interpersonal space created by social interactions (Patton et al., 2016, p.72). Collective identities refer to one's sense of self within social categories such as ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and nationalities, and "the feelings, beliefs, and attitudes that result from

identifying with them" (Vignoles et al., 2011, p.3). Material identities are social entities beyond the self, consisting of geographic places and material artifacts such as cars, houses, clothes, and even bank accounts (p.4). I found this categorization by Vignoles et al. (2011) to be highly useful and applicable, so I incorporated it as the structure to guide my interview questions on identity development.

While the literature on student development and identity formation has grown rapidly, study on international student identity development remains limited (Kim, 2012). Identity inconsistencies or discontinuities are labeled "identity gaps," meaning the gap between how they express themselves and how they see themselves as well as between how they see themselves and how others see them (Jung & Hecht, 2004). Identity gaps are predicted by acculturation levels and perceived discrimination (Jung et al., 2007). The gaps have been found to be associated with negative consequences among U.S. college students (Jung & Hecht, 2004). Based on an international student survey at the University of Kansas, Schmitt et al. (2003) found that although perceiving oneself as a "minority" leads to a sense of being from the outside and rejection. Interesting, they stated that identifying as international students as a group is positively related to self-esteem.

Kim (2012) interviewed 22 international students from one U.S. university and suggested a new model of development with 6 phases: Pre-exposure, Exposure, Enclosure, Emergence, Integration, and Internationalization. According to this model, international students would progress through the phases through factors such as their degree of interaction with others, length of stay in the U.S., level of self-confidence, emotional and social support, motivation, personal temperament, and utilization of student services such as mentor programs. Another qualitative study to understand 28 Chinese international students' political identity in various western

countries, Gao (2021), finds that their identities are heterogeneous, impressionable, and transitionally contingent. However, these qualitative studies did not define identity clearly in either psychological or educational terms. There remains much space to understanding on how international students develop in a new environment.

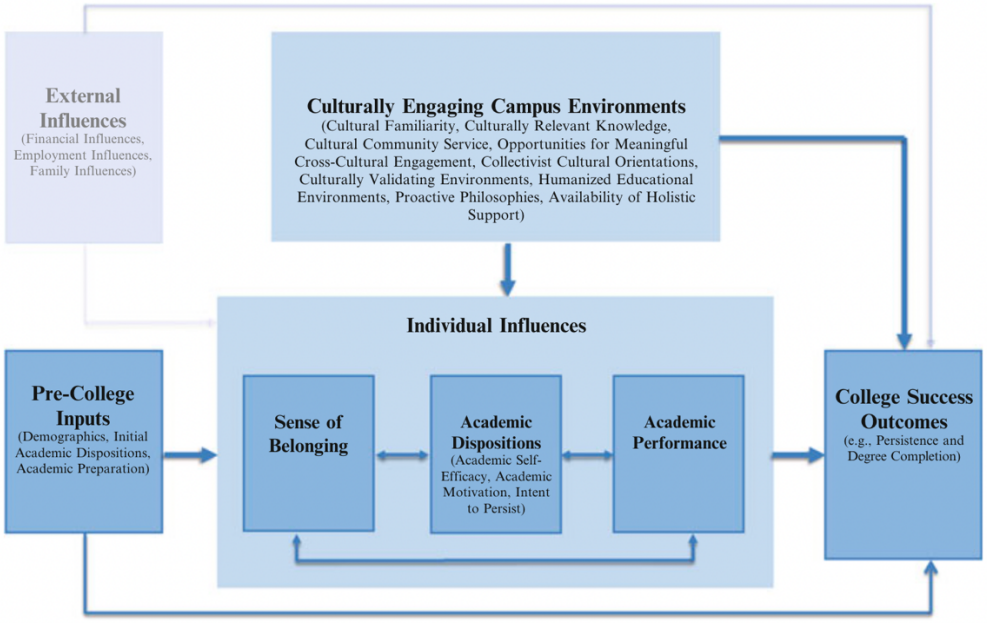
4. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

When studying college international student experiences, scholars have been applying theoretical and conceptual frameworks from a few foundational works. Frequently used models include the following: Student Integration Model (Tinto, 1997), Acculturation Models (Berry, 2005), Student Involvement Theory (Astin, 1999), Relative Acculturation Model (Navas et al., 2005), and Life Course Theory (Elder & Shanahan, 2006).

One recent model on student college success that gained popularity in higher education studies is the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Framework, proposed by Museus (2018). CECE examines success among racially diverse colleges' student populations because the previous frameworks might be instructive in building up models yet omitted the racial climates and cultural influences (see Figure 2-2). But CECE highlights these significant predictors that impact postsecondary education adjustment, persistence, and degree completion.

racial climates and cultural influences (see Figure 2-2). But CECE highlights these significant predictors that impact postsecondary education adjustment, persistence, and degree completion.

Figure 2-2. *The Cultural Engaging Campus Environment Model*

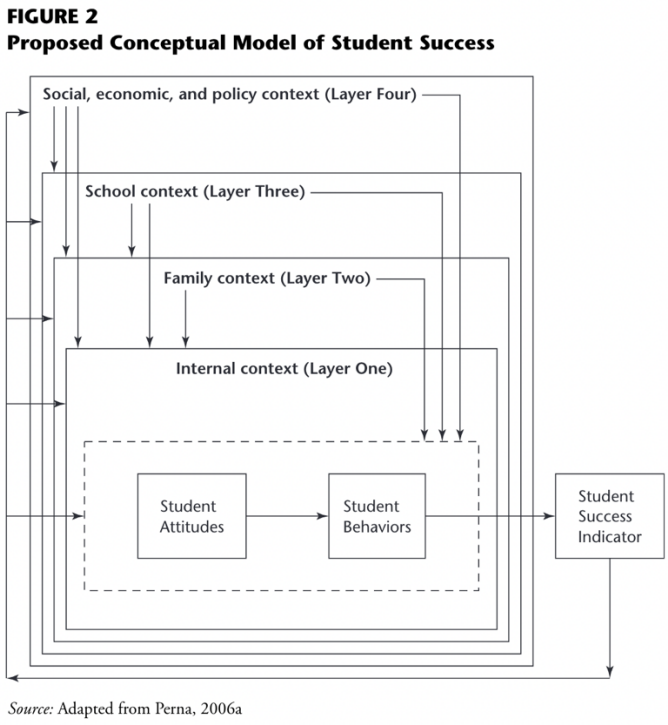


Source: Museus, 2014, p. 207

Museus' CECE model is designed to accommodate an increase diverse domestic student population on the U.S. campus. But some of the elements might be applicable to study the international population because the many cultural factors in the CECE model may be transferable. For examples, these following indicators are instrumental to international student population's campus adjustment: *"cultural familiarity, culturally relevant knowledge, cultural community service, opportunities for meaningful cross-cultural engagement, collectivist cultural orientations, culturally validating environments, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, availability of holistic support"* (Museus, 2014, p.207).

An earlier model (see Figure 2-3), proposed by Perna and Thomas (2008), is also quite useful when conceptualizing student success. Their model takes into account of multiple contextual layers, with the students at the center. Layer one is the internal context, layers two is the family context, layer three as the school context, and layer four is the social, economic, and policy context. They operationalized student success through ten indicators in four categories: college readiness (educational aspirations and academic preparation), college enrollment (college access and college choice), college achievement (academic performance, transfer, and persistence to completion), and post-college attainment (post-BA enrollment, income, and education attainment) (Perna & Thomas, 2008, p.6). Perna and Thomas' (2008) conceptualization shares similarity with the human ecological theory by Bronfenbrenner (1993), and I found it to be a comprehensive way to think about what impacts a student's experience.

Figure 2-3. *Conceptual Model of Student Success*



Source: Perna & Thomas, 2008, p.30.

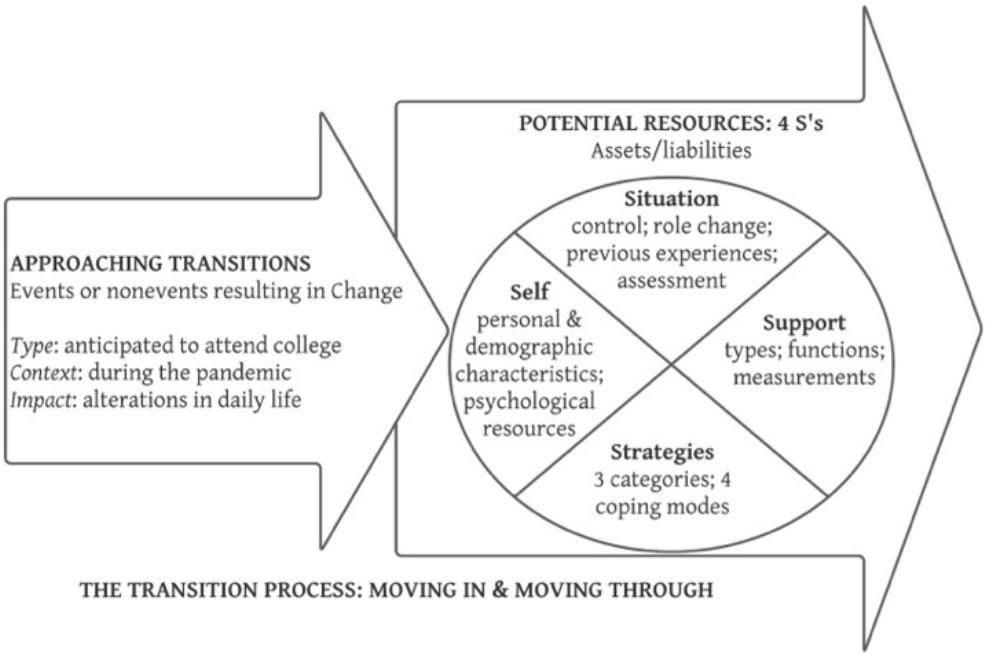
Aside from conceptual framework on student success, I believe that theoretical models from college student development to be useful, especially when considering the common challenges students face at their developmental stage. After reviewing 30 studies on what predict undergraduate international student psychosocial adjustment to US universities, Brunsting et al. (2018) found two most frequently used theoretical frameworks: Acculturation Theory (Berry, 2005) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). They pointed out that since 2009, there has been a shift from sociocultural adaptation framework to acculturation and social identity theories. They stated that more studies from the developmental theories should be adopted to guide research in international student studies. Brunsting et al. (2018)'s view was echoed by Ballo et al., (2019), who argued that the person-environment framework could provide a developmental and holistic approach to international student services studies (p.18).

Predominantly developed by Astin (1984), Bronfenbrenner (1993), and Schlossberg (1981), the person-environment framework focuses "not [on] what is being developed, but where and how development takes place (Patton et al., 2016, p. 34)". This framework has provided me with useful way for understanding and analyzing student development and outcomes because it comprehensively encompasses the interacting forces of ideology and culture, social and organizational structure, time, and individual agency (Arnold et al., 2012). Macro-, exo-, meso-, and microsystems interact together in "a system of nested, interdependent, dynamic structures ranging from the proximal, consisting of immediate face-to-face settings, to the most distal, comprising broader social contexts such as classes and culture" (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 4).

Originated from counseling psychology, Schlossberg's adult transition model became prevalent to guide studies in college student development (Anderson et al., 2011; Goodman et al., 2006; Schlossberg, 1981). Goodman et al. (2006) updated the model to include technological

advancement from global perspectives and Anderson et al. (2011) added diversity and multicultural issues. Transition was defined by Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson as "any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (2006, p.33).

Figure 2-4. *The Transition Model*



Source: Adapted from Anderson et al., 2011

In my past studies, I have modified this model to understand the transitioning experiences of my participants and to examine the locations of development across different domains(see Figure 2-4). For instance, in the pilot study, I analyzed participants' interactions with peers. professors, and extracurricular activities. The intersection of individual life and sociohistorical context is a crucial determinant of educational outcomes, as "students are shaped in part by the era in which they attend college" (Renn & Arnold, 2003, p. 272). COVID-19 has been a

macrosystem disaster and time-specific event, which invariably affects student study and choices, especially within the microsystems.

In addition to conceptual frameworks in student success and student development, I found the sociological theories to be enlightening. Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as: the summation of resources that one obtains through social networks and cultural capital as to what can be attained and transmitted through language skills, cultural knowledge, and mannerisms associated with class status (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu's (1986) sociology theories on social reproduction and social capital, cultural capital, and economic capital suggest that international schools have created a special habitus that formed the identities of international school students.

However, the analysis and explanation of capitals seems to be somewhat limiting as one transitions across international spaces and borders. International schools are high-cost private schools in Asia, and international students in English-speaking countries normally need to pay full tuition, indicating that these students come from families with relatively high economic capitals.

On the other hand, this set of theories does not directly answer what happens to students in the international higher education sphere. International students new to a habitus might gradually adapt and acquire various forms of capitals. As the students come from new middle- or upper-class families, it is possible that their parents and previous network might not possess the knowledge of how to acquire local capitals in the host countries.

One reason is that the massification of higher education in developing countries is only a recent phenomenon, meaning that only a small proportion of the last generation has acquired higher education. In the concept of current U.S. higher education studies, these international students might be "first-generation" students in a double sense: their parents did not receive

higher education at home or abroad. It would present challenges to understanding the local habitus and hidden curriculum.

Table 2-2. *Bourdieu's theory on Field/Practice*

Formula: (Habitus* Capital) + Field = Practice

Habitus	Socially conditioned sensibilities that informs a person's perceptions, feelings, and actions.	Created from the interaction of the individual self, group culture, and the social institutions of the family and the school.	Reproduced overtime through the interplay of the individual's subconscious with the social structure they encounter.
Fields	A network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. Each field has its own logic, rules, and regularities that need to be understood in relations to forms of capital. A capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field.		
Forms of Capitals	**Economic**	Monetary resources and material goods	
	Social	Human resources gained through social networks, which give rise trust, power, and influence.	
	Cultural	Recognize the rule of the dominant culture, know how to act in each situation (manners and customs) Three forms: 1. Embodied: one's taste, communication styles, and knowledge of the dominant culture 2. Objectified: concrete cultural objects 3. Institutionalized: educational credentials	
Other forms of capitals	**Scholastic**	Intellectual knowledge	
	Linguistic	Ease in the command of language	
	Political	Status in the political world	
Social agents	Bearers of capitals, and depending on their trajectories and on the positions they occupy in the field by virtue of their endowment (volume and structure) in capital, they have a propensity to orient themselves actively either towards the preservation of the distribution of capital or towards the subversion of this distribution.		

Sources: Distinction. Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.109.

Being grouped as international school graduates or IB alums might mask students' intersecting identities, and "individuals experience the paradox of simultaneous marginalization and privilege" (Patton et al., 2016, p.30). Understanding how these students embraces multiple intersecting identities may also be quite valuable. Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) updated The Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) to incorporate key constructs of self-authorship theory and to explain individual identity development. The self-perceptions of MMDI, such as race, social class, and gender, are influenced by contexts of "peers, family, norms, stereotypes, and socio-political conditions" (p. 7). Between these contextual influences and the self-perceptions of MMDI, the meaning-making filter acts as a sieve, and "depending on complexity, contextual influences pass through to different degrees" to influence identity self-perceptions (p.7).

Increased cognitive complexity and more sophisticated meaning-making lead to nuanced messages passing through the sieve and interacting in the core of the atom, which is the self-perceived MMDI. More recently, Jones and Abes (2013) applied the MMDI with other theories (intersectionality, queer theory, and critical race theory). Studies of intersecting identities are now popular topics that deepen our knowledge about the complexity of lived experiences in higher education and society (Patton et al., 2016). In this dissertation, I may not apply the MMDI but would hope to integrate this complex perspective into my research in the future.

5. Chapter Two Summary

In Chapter Two, I reviewed literature from a few different academic fields that illuminate the educational experiences of the international mobile student population from Asia. I started with a more macro-level perspective and introduced literature on globalization and internationalization of the higher education. The second set of literature comprised sections on international schools, the IBDP, and their student experiences. Recent research discusses the

international school system as one that produces the global middle classes in various countries. In addition, the TCK literature points out the salient features that the international school population share in common. However, this set of literature is strictly limited to the secondary education level. In a few dissertations that concentrate on IB students, whether they aimed at understanding Chinese IB student's nationalistic orientation (Zhou, 2015), Ecuadorean IB students' adaptation process (Bittencourt, 2020), or Egyptian IB students' learning outcomes (Belal, 2015), pointed out the needs to follow up with students after they enter higher education.

Turning to the third section on higher education literature, I began with the important discussion on the definition issue surrounding international students. I then summarized what has been found in previous systematic review or literature review articles: the past trends and themes in international student mobility and experiences research. Further, the discussion and research in the psychology and counseling disciplines were presented because they consistently identified the acculturation and stress challenges facing international students from Asia and China. I added a section of IBDP graduate experiences in higher education. Although the students in the studies moved into domestic universities in the anglophone countries, this is a group of research that connects secondary education with higher education. It demonstrates the potential similarity and differences that might exist between various populations, which I could use to compare my research population with theirs.

Moreover, many studies across disciplines pointed out the role of language and culture in impacting international student college acculturation, adaptation, and satisfaction. Then the question becomes whether international school graduates or IB alums would experience higher education with fewer difficulties, assuming they are accustomed to the western language and curriculum and attend anglophone universities. If challenges indeed exist, it is worth exploring

whether and how nationality, race, ethnicity, and identity play critical roles in international university transitioning experience. There remains much space to assess whether international students, who attended English-medium international schools in Asia, would encounter similar challenges in anglophone colleges. The social identity question, especially concerning the four integrated levels: individual, relational, collective, and material (Vignoles et al., 2011), would be utilized to guide the dissertation interview question structure.

The fourth and last section of this chapter presented the prevalently utilized conceptual frameworks and theoretical models that have been applied in studying international student population. The transition theory, in particular, was very useful to guide my pilot study on college transitions during the pandemic. Building on that, I explained my preference for using sociology and student development theories in this dissertation. The conceptual models on student success will be used inform my study and will be compared against my proposed model on international university transition. In the next chapter, I will describe in detail how this dissertation is designed in accordance with the chosen theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Data collection and analysis procedures will also be discussed.

Chapter Three: Research Method

To re-iterate, the purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of the globally mobile students who graduated IBDP schools in Asia and then enrolled in universities in an Anglophone country. I aim to address the following questions: *What are the experiences of Asian IB students who graduated from international schools as they transition transnationally to university? What theory/model explains how students were able (or not able) to experience a successful international university transition?*

This third chapter discusses the specific methods by which the dissertation conducts research and analysis. I start by describing the research paradigm and the corresponding qualitative research strategy. Then, I present detailed sections on research design and procedures: population selection, data collection, data analysis, theory generation, validating finding strategies, and ethical considerations. Lastly, I share preliminary findings from my pilot study and outline some expected outcomes, which informed the design of this dissertation.

1.1 Research Paradigm and Philosophical Perspective

This dissertation is qualitative research because of my belief system, worldview, and values that ground my study in social constructivism epistemologies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Intersectionality and postcolonialism have also influenced my thinking because of my doctoral education training in the international higher education field. I study educational systems and cross-border movements under the context of globalization and internationalization, which reflect the power hierarchies and structural inequalities in our world. Therefore, I think and write about educational and social issues, using concepts of privileges and oppressions and concerning factors such as gender, class, race, and ethnicity.

Social constructivism is very appropriate for studying how individuals and groups make meaning of the world (Patton et al., p.76). According to the constructivist paradigm, multiple realities exist and differ in context; knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and researched population (Abes, 2009; Creswell, 2013, Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). For critical and cultural paradigms, truth is also socially constructed based on "unacknowledged gender, culture, sexuality, class, language, and even personality preferences" (Guido et al., 2010, p. 10). Intersectionality recognizes that all people possess multiple, intersecting identities, which influence and constitute one another. As a result, "individuals experience the paradox of simultaneous marginalization and privilege" (Patton et al., 2016, p.40). Postcolonialism accounts for the global history of imperialism and its lasting effects on shaping contemporary societies. Postcolonial studies "demand a denunciation of white privilege and centering of the dominant, nonindigenous culture" (Patton et al., 2016, p.40).

This research is value-laden: I believe in the value of international education and wish to understand the impact it has on the groups of students who are experiencing it (axiology). I will include my interpretation in conjunction with the interpretations of the participants. I believe that there are multiple realities socially constructed by student voices (ontology), so I will present their voices from different perspectives. I remain aware that IB education in Asia is relatively elitist and Euro-centric, the student families are mostly socioeconomically privileged, and the graduates are typically academically high-achieving. I bring my unique advantage of insider insights from past work and study experiences into connecting with the interviewees and understanding their experiences. I aim to remain objective throughout the process to bring students' voices and to present findings that could move forward the scholarly conversation in international education (epistemology).

1.2 Choosing Qualitative Research Strategy and Grounded Theory

Based on my research paradigm and my intent to make sense of the meanings this population of students have about their world, an inductive qualitative approach is the most appropriate (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Patton et al., 2016). I used grounded theory, which is a systemic yet flexible method to collect, analyze, and theorize qualitative data inductively and to understand how something changes over time (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory is a qualitative design developed in 1967 by sociology scholars Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. They believed that the inquirer should generate a general explanation (a theory) of a process, an action, or an interaction based on data collected from individuals. Grounded theory, in short, consists of a systematic approach to inquiry for theory construction (Charmaz, 2014).

Among the branches of grounded theory, I gravitated toward Charmaz's social constructivist perspective. Charmaz (2014) focuses on a theory developed that depends on the researcher's view, learning about the experience within embedded, hidden networks, situations, and relationships, as well as making visible hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity. Emphasis is placed on the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals than on the methods of research. At the same time, the practices of gathering rich data, coding the data, memoing, and using theoretical sampling are also important and critical practices (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2017, p.137). According to Charmaz, such a method would help "assess how data from small qualitative studies reflect larger discourses and trends" (2021, p.165). In my study, the data gathered around Asian international IB alums could reflect the larger educational trend of globally mobile students who pursue an international higher education degree.

Data in grounded theory can derive from multiple sources: interviews, observations, and a wide variety of documentary materials (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Besides describing the IB school graduates' experience (i.e., the phenomenon), I could include information based on "journal articles, conferences presentations, or interviews" that share additional insights (Terrell, 2016, p.160). As such, I integrated knowledge from my pilot study (Wang, 2023), scoping review on IB education (Wang et al., under review), IB official websites, and school websites to generate information.

2. Data Collection Procedures

2.1 Population Selection and Recruitment

I created a detailed criteria to select the research population. The research participant needs to meet the following criteria: a student who self-identifies as Asian, received international IBDP education in Asia, and has finished at least one semester in person in an institution located in an anglophone context by the time of the interview (summer of 2022). I aimed to capture a wide range of participants who fit the criteria, so the university contexts were confined within the top four international student recruitment countries (the US, the UK, Canada, and Australia). I also included the EMI institutions located in Malaysia, Hong Kong SAR, and Japan.

Research participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling if they met the above criteria (Terrell, 2016). I first used a social media campaign on Twitter and my personal website, hoping to recruit research participants with a $15 e-gift card as an incentive (Appendix A: Recruitment Flyers). This campaign lasted from April to May 2022 but did not generate satisfactory responses. Then I reached out to both the students that I formerly interviewed and the IB alumni office, asking for their references (Appendix B: Recruitment Email). I soon noticed repeated differences between participants who graduated from the

international schools and the private local international schools, as well as between genders. I returned to the literature and engaged in the theoretical sampling process, which is aimed at generating robust theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2014). Then I started the second stage of recruitment, specifically targeting students who attended local international schools and those who were male.

2.2 Interview Process

Over the three months, I interviewed a total of 37 research participants. Among them, two students were recruited for criteria checking: they fulfill all the criteria except they were not Asians. Their interviews proved that their experiences did differ from those of Asian students, and so the criteria were very effective in setting the boundary. As such, I generated the model and presented the findings based on the 35 participants who fulfill the selection criteria.

After receiving the signed consent forms (Appendix C: Informed Consent Form), I arranged individual Zoom sessions with the participants. I recorded the interviews on my computer and then saved them into the Boston College server (password-protected). Appendix D: Interview Protocols presents the semi-structured interview questions list. As Charmaz (2014) suggested, I began with sensitizing concepts as initial and tentative tools for developing ideas about processes defined in data. I incorporated concepts from the theoretical frameworks to set a structure for interview questions and examine data.

On average, each semi-structured interview with student participants took about 72 minutes, depending on participants' availability. Some conversations were much longer because the interviewee wished to share more in-depth stories. The longest conversations spanned several days and totaled over 130 minutes.

2.3 Study Participant Characteristic

Table 3-1. *Participants' Self-identification*

Home Country	TCK		Total
	No	Yes	
China	8	1	9
India	1	5	6
Indonesia	3	1	4
Thailand	2	1	3
Vietnam	1	2	3
Nepal		2	2
Hong Kong	2		2
Pakistan		1	1
Bangladesh		1	1
The Philippines		1	1
Myanmar		1	1
Malaysia		1	1
Mongolia	1		1
Total	**18**	**17**	**35**

Regarding student characteristics, the gender distribution was uneven: 25 participants self-identified as female (68.4%), and 11 as male (31.6%). More female students responded to the *call for participants* and recommended their classmates or friends to participate in the interview. Many interviewees grew up in countries outside their passport country, so it was difficult for them to answer the question, "where are you from?" Students answered according to

where they felt they most belonged (Table 3-1). The countries are as follows: China (9), India (6), Indonesia (4), Thailand (3), Vietnam (3), Nepal (2), Hong Kong (2), Pakistan (1), Bangladesh (1), Philippines (1), Myanmar (1), Malaysia (1), and Mongolia (1). Seventeen regarded themselves as TCKs, and eighteen did not.

At the time of the interview, students had finished one year or two years of university, so they could effectively reflect on the international transition process. All students were currenting attending university in English-speaking contexts (Table 3-2), including Australia (2), Canada (4), the UK (6), the US (18), and the EMI institutions in Hong Kong (2), Germany (1), and Japan (1). The universities were mostly highly ranked world-class university or highly selective liberal arts colleges in the U.S.

They study different academic disciplines (Table 3-3): Social Sciences (11), Biological Sciences (9), Science and Engineering (5), Arts and Humanities (4), Computer Science (3), and Business (3). As for future aspirations, almost all of them intend to pursue a graduate degree. When they discussed future professions, many hoped to be high-skilled professionals, doctors, engineers, software engineers, professors, psychologists, scientists, researchers, and lawyers. They envisioned themselves working for international organizations, multinational corporations, high technology companies, start-ups, or government branches. When I asked about their future plans after graduation, 31 students (88.6%) preferred finding a job in or staying at the host country or nearby country.

Table 3-2. *Participants' University Information*

Australia	**2**
University of West Australia	1
University of Melbourne	1
Canada	**4**
The University of British Columbia	3
Concordia University, Canada	1
Germany	**1**
BIMM Institute Berlin	1
Hong Kong	**2**
Hong Kong University	2
Japan	**1**
Tokyo International University	1
Malaysia	**1**
Taylor's University	1
UK	**6**
University College London	4
University of Central Lancashire in Preston	1
Cardiff University	1
USA	**18**
Tufts University	2
University of Washington- Seattle	2
University of California San Diego	2
Claremont McKenna College	2
New York University	2
Boston University	2
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	1
Swarthmore College	1
Wheaton College	1
Emory University	1
Parsons School of Design	1
Stanford University	1
Grand Total	**35**

Table 3-3. *Participants' Academic Discipline Information*

Academic Disciplines	Interviewees
Social Sciences	11
Biological Sciences	9
Science and Engineering	5
Arts and Humanities	4
Computer Science	3
Business	3
Grand Total	**35**

Participants graduated from two main types of high schools: traditional international schools (Type A) and local internationalized schools (Type B) (Table 3-4). Ten schools are Type A and eight are Type B. Based on participant descriptions, the high school environment, teacher compositions, student compositions, and learning atmosphere differ greatly. For students enrolled in Type A international schools, the reason is primarily family relocation due to parents' job change. This is often the case with the expatriates' families. Typically, the father is employed at a multinational corporation that assigns him to a post in another country. As the whole family moves to the new country, the children enroll in the international school for education. In addition to students from expatriate's families, many participants who graduated from Type A international schools come from local middle-class and upper-class families. Their families wished them to be fluent in the English language and planned to send their children abroad for higher education, and they view the Type A K-12 international school as an ideal education preparation.

A few participants graduated from Type B local internationalized schools, mostly not located in the capital cities of the home country. One main reason is that there are national restrictions imposed on nationality or citizenship requirements. For example, China's education laws prohibit students from enrolling in a public school or participating in the local college entrance exam if the family does not have a local Hukou (household registration system). For these Chinese families, the localized international schools provide an alternative to the national public or local private schools. By enrolling international schools, these students were not eligible to participate in China's college entrance exam and must pursue higher education abroad.

Table 3-4. *Participants' High School Information*

Countries	High Schools	Interviewees
China	○ Type A: Nanjing International School ○ Type A: Dulwich College Beijing ○ Type B: Beijing Royal School ○ Type B: Suzhou Industrial Foreign Language School	9
Hong Kong	○ Type A: Hong Kong Academy ○ Type A: UWC Hong Kong ○ Type B: Diocesan Boys' School	5
India	○ Type B: Oberoi International School in Mumbai ○ Type A: Canadian International School in Bangalore	3
Indonesia	○ Type B: Sekolah Pelita Harapan Lippo Village ○ Type B: Sekolah Ciputra Surabaya	3
Malaysia	○ Type B: Cempaka International School ○ Type A: International School of Kuala Lumpur	3
Mongolia	○ Type B** Information deleted for confidentiality reason	1
Singapore	○ Type A: Global International Indian School Singapore ○ Type A: UWC Singapore	4
Thailand	○ Type A: International School of Bangkok	5

Vietnam	o	Type A: International School of Ho Chi Minh City	2
10		**18**	**35**

3. Data Analysis and Theory Generation

The follow section provides an overview of the inductive data-analysis process (initial, focused, and theoretical coding) and reports some of the data collected throughout the process. I followed primarily the guidance of Charmaz (2014) and Saldaña (2015) in coding and generating my process theory. The findings are summarized in Figure 5-1 that is named as The Successful International University Transition Model.

3.1 Initial Coding

During the first stage, I followed the Saldaña's (2015) coding manual and coded extensively. I used deep reading and line-by-line analysis to label segments of the narratives. I developed a total of 196 codes. These codes included In-Vivo codes, concept codes, affective codes, attributes codes, concept codes, versus codes, emotions and values codes, and process codes. Some initial codes were descriptive, recounting the story in concise terms.

In-Vivo codes were derived directly from the language of the participants to encapsulate and emphasize problems in a way that was meaningful to them (Charmaz, 2014). For example, one code was coded In-Vivo as the interviewee reflected on the first-year learning experiences online during COVID: "*as if we were on auto-pilot* and were not really consciously making decisions." Another example is when a student described, "*I have never felt at home in India or Canada*; having culture shock isn't very new to me." Several other interviewees spoke in similar ways, though not verbatim, so these codes were repeatedly utilized. These In-Vivo codes were very useful in generating theoretical insights into the direct experience of the phenomenon without requiring further abstraction.

Through line-by-line coding of the transcripts, I constantly compared and contrasted codes against similar ones, merging common categories that represented larger chunks of data (Charmaz, 2014). I sought to develop early minor conceptual categories to emphasize the actions in progress, which became useful to facilitate comparative analysis. These early categories used action verbs. For example, in the evaluation category, I coded segments as "perceiving cultural differences" and "perceiving inter-generational differences." In the university transition category, I coded transcripts fragments as "exposing to new people and events" and "realizing in what ways I could grow and change." Comparing incidents, cases, and events against each other provided new insights across various topics, ranging from family relationships and high school learning to university transition. This process helped me refine codes and develop categories (Charmaz, 2014).

3.2 Focused Coding

After initial coding, I began the second stage of focused coding to refine categories, synthesize, and explain more significant data segments, as guided by Charmaz (2014). Focused coding is an iterative process that aims to identify the most salient and prevalent themes within the study and subject the themes to a higher level of abstraction. I re-read each transcript carefully and contrasted them against early minor conceptual categories from the initial coding. I examined the interviewees' experiences and sought to find alternative explanations. I sometimes refined codes to reflect the subtle changes or meanings in data. For example, during this stage, segments under the vague code "changes and development" were refined to specific sub-codes under "cognitive complexity." At this stage, I noticed the importance of sociology categories and started applying codes of economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital. I continued

focused coding with constant comparative analysis alongside theoretical coding until I identified all theoretical categories.

3.3 Axial Coding

Axial coding is an important strategy proposed by Strauss and Corbin and popular among researchers. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that axial coding provides answers to questions relating to "when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences (p.125)". Participants' statements are organized in scientific terms and schemes, including conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences to answer corresponding questions. Charmaz (2014) and Saldaña (2015) pointed out that Axial coding has clear advantages but also received considerable criticism. As it provides a suitable frame and structure for coding, I also adopted axial coding and found it to be useful in this dissertation.

3.4 Theoretical Coding

Theoretical coding, or selective/conceptual coding as called in different publications, was essential during my analysis. As Saldaña (2015) summed, the theoretical code is not the theory itself but the "keyword or key phrase that triggers a discussion of the theory itself (p.250)". Charmaz (2014) explained that a theoretical code should "specifies the possible relationships between categories and moves the analytic story in a theoretical direction" (p.150). So I used theoretical codes to organize data and then provided discussion.

This stage took me most of the dissertation writing time. I reviewed my analytic memos for each participant, each transcript, code, and category again and again. I drew many diagrams and graphs and tried various ways to illustrate the central/core categories and their relationship, conditions, interactions, and processes. It seemed to me that a truly original theory development was impossible because I used theoretical terms from past literature, either psychology or

sociology. With this puzzlement, I read other methodology literature and found slight ease again in the coding manual. Saldaña stated that "original theory development is not always necessary in a qualitative study." He referenced Hennink et al.:

> Research that applies pre-existing theories in different contexts or social circumstances or elaborates or modifies earlier theories can be just as substantive. Nevertheless, during this cycle of theory building, it is essential to address the "how" and "why" questions to explain the phenomena in terms of how they work, develop, compare to others, or why they happen under certain circumstances conditions. pp. 258–261 & 277; as cited in Saldaña, 2015, p.251.

With this advice in mind and aimed to be "just as substantive", I started to adopt terms from sociology. I intended to use them as sensitizing concepts at the beginning of this dissertation, as outlined in my literature review chapter. Reading through participant narratives, I gradually identified important components of the study, including contexts, conditions, interactions, and consequences. There were a few core concepts I struggled to define, which included several components and categories, which I have previously coded as "cognitive complexity development" and "independence and co-dependence" under the context and process category of "exposing to new people and situations."

As I re-organize the data, I began to see emerging necessary conditions, including "academic preparation," "family guidance," and "environment mismatch." It became increasingly clear that the original question about university transition experiences was inadequate. The process of university transition is embedded within the larger social structure in which the institution is based. According to my participants, their challenges arose from restrictions or conditions bounded by the local community and the country. Therefore, I searched for an appropriate term that best captures the essence of this process. I read other literature on

geography, mobility, emerging adulthood, and sociology and tried to see if existing academic terms could hold the summative power for my major and minor categories in the transcripts.

At last, I decided to use the term "*habitus*" by Pierre Bourdieu. In the general sense, *Habitus* refers to the physical embodiment of cultural capital: socially ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions. Bourdieu's work on social and cultural capital can be seen in numerous studies that examined student experiences in higher education. So, it is quite common to evoke understanding on the subject. *Habitus* captures the subjective feelings and objective world conditions very well, as it shows how we perceive the social world around us and how it allows us to navigate social situations. I chose *habitus* also because it was used during coding to denote students' complex cognition as they moved across contexts. Further, based on the data, I aimed to find the proper term to capture the type of Habitus. I debated on using "global citizens," "globally mobile youth," or "transnational citizens." And finally, I settled on "global citizenship." These concepts are explained in more detail in Chapter Five as I present and explain them alongside the model.

3.5 Theoretical Sampling

As predicted, theoretical sampling and saturation became integral to my data collection and analysis. Theoretically, sampling is "to collect data from places, people, and events that will maximize opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimension, uncover variations and identify relationships between the concept" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.134). I used it in practice to collect data from elaborating and refining categories for my emerging theory (Charmaz, 2014).

During initial sampling, I established sampling criteria for people (with certain demographic characteristics), cases, situations, and settings before I started. For theoretical

sampling, it is a way to prompt me to think and predict where and how I could find needed data to fill gaps between categories and develop the properties to saturate categories. I have taken a few quantitative statistical analysis classes, and so I had to rethink about the meaning of "sampling", as theoretical sampling is not about representing the population or increasing the statistical generalizability. I constantly remind myself that I should strive for data-gathering toward explicitly developing theoretical categories derived from the analysis.

I wrote demographic and situational memos for each participant and then found the variations during constant comparison. After finishing ten interviews, I noticed how participants discussed their transitioning processes with varying difficulty levels. Their adjustment to university and future ambitions are closely connected to their relationship with their families. It led me to develop a code of "being supported by family members" under the core category of *Family Guidance*.

However, because support from family is an element that surfaced quite frequently, it was a suggestive yet superficial code that needed further development. How were students supported during this transnational journey, especially when alone? Financial support, such as tuition payment, is only one aspect. What were other ways of supporting young people at a challenging stage? The data left me puzzled. So, I employed strategic, specific, and systemic theoretical sampling, as suggested by Charmaz.

I then revised my guide to include a few focused questions to learn about this category. During the subsequent interviews, I added specific questions relating to family support, particularly the types of family support. It led me to elaborate and refine my theoretical categories. I developed another code for "family cultural capital" with newly collected data. I coded new transcripts and compared codes with earlier codes and emerging categories. I sought

to delineate and develop properties of this category and the range of variation, with subcodes of "family values influencing me" and "family having limited information or clue." This category became significant in the theory generation process, and I similarly located another group of codes within this category on "obtaining information". These codes showcased the many facets within the broad sociological term *family cultural capital*.

3.6 Theoretical Saturation

Theoretical saturation is central to grounded theory generation, and many authors have acknowledged the difficulty in determining whether conceptual saturation is achieved (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Dey, 1999). Corbin and Strauss (2015) explained that the aim for theoretical saturation is to develop each category or theme fully in terms of its properties and dimensions for variation. In other words, the entire data collection and analysis process is satisfied until I, the researcher, have acquired sufficient data to fully describe each category or term in terms of its properties and dimensions. Because I coded too much in the line-by-line reading, I did not develop many new initial codes after the first ten interviews. But it did not mean I had reached theoretical saturation. I continued to code for concepts, properties, and dimensions during the following stages, along with sorting and comparing memos.

When I read the work by theory-building researchers, I realized that it was common to state that they collected data until theoretical saturation took place. I had a sense of doubt regarding my categories and was not certain if I have considered all the possibilities. Time, energy, and availability all imposed constraints on my data collection and analysis in a dissertation study. The perennial question of saturation and adequacy, faced by all qualitative researchers, also "haunted" me during this time. I strived to achieve thick, rich descriptions with

data collection to overcome such doubt, which is why the data analysis section of this dissertation is very lengthy.

In addition, I adopted a strategy suggested by Creswell (2013) to move toward saturation: discriminant sampling: “the researcher gather additional information from individuals different from those people initially interviewed to determine if the theory holds true for these additional participants (p.90)”. Discriminant sampling is different from theoretical sampling and may generate useful information. So, I interviewed two participants, one male, and one female, who also received IB international schooling in Asia (China and Thailand) and were now attending universities in the US and UK. They differed from my target population’s demographics because they did not self-identify as Asians but as Caucasians and citizens of North America and Europe. Through interviewing them, I gained a good understanding of the differences in abstract patterns.

3.7 Situational Analysis and Mapping

While conducting analysis and reading additional literature at a later stage, I came across the situation analysis advocated by Adele E. Clarke. I was in the process of visualizing the theory in a logical, simple, and straightforward way. Advocates for situational analysis pointed out that this approach could improve traditional grounded theory by Strauss and Corbin’s conditional/consequential matrix because it renders invisible structural relationships and processes visible (Charmaz, 2014; Clarke, 2015). They stated that situational analysis accounted for the material environment, nonhuman actors, discourses, and structural elements that shape and condition the studied situation. It has roots in the Chicago School’s sociological ethnographies and pragmatist philosophy and “includes Foucauldian discourse studies going beyond the knowing subject” (Clarke, 2015, p.95). At this stage, the situational analysis provided

valuable for its suggestion on taking the nonhuman explicitly and analyzing implicated actors and actants.

In particular, the abstract situational map (Clarke, 2015, p.102) identified three elements that provoked my thinking and designing of the model. The first one is the temporal elements, which are the historical, seasonal, crisis, and trajectory aspects – in my study, the COVID-19 pandemic was a common thread in participants' university journey. Secondly, the sociocultural/symbolic elements included religion, race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, nationality, logos, and icons. I asked my interviewees questions regarding their social identities so that the sociocultural aspects could be discussed more thoroughly. Thirdly, the spatial elements were important, meaning the spaces in the situation, geographical aspects, and local, regional, and global spatial issues. This element was quite significant in my study because students' transition and development occurred not solely in the university but as a result of interactions with new people and home friends and families in different spaces. Clarke (2015, p.98) argued that "the conditions of the situation are in the situation", which impacted my interpretation and writing on the conditions and contexts:

> There is no such thing as "context." The conditional elements of the situation need to be specified in the analysis of the situation itself as they are constitutive of it, not merely surrounding it or framing it or contributing to it. They are it. Regardless of whether some actors might construe them as local or global, internal or external, close-in or far away, or whatever, the fundamental question is: "How do these conditions appear—make themselves felt as consequential—as integral parts of the empirical situation under examination?" At least some answers to that question can be found through doing situational analyses. The fundamental assumptions are that everything in the situation both constitutes and affects most everything else in the situation in some way(s).

3.8 Summary On Coding and Data Analysis Process

The grounded theory approach has received criticism due to the lack of transparency in theoretical development, so it is very crucial to record and outline all analytical and sampling decisions in detail (Cooney, 2011). I followed the guidance of methodology experts Charmaz, Saldaña, Clarke, Strauss, and Corbin and adopted a more flexible approach to developing initial, focused, axial, and theoretical codes. I conducted focused coding to identify recurrent conceptual patterns and continued comparative analysis and theoretical coding. The process continued until theoretical categories were relatively well-defined and supported with detailed codes and descriptions of integrative memos. To achieve theoretical sufficiency, I strived for theoretical concept saturation rather than sampling saturation. In Chapter Five, I will describe the findings derived from the grounded theory approach and provide synthesized results.

4. Strategies for Validating Findings

Producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner is important for all types of research so that the results can be trusted and transferred (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). From the constructivist paradigm, the traditional positivist criteria of internal and external validity are replaced by such terms as trustworthiness and authenticity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p.197). Grounded theorists rarely use criteria of validity and reliability, and the Straussian grounded theory prefers using "quality" and "credibility" in qualitative research instead of the "validity" and "reliability" terms from quantitative research (Charmaz, 2021).

Although this qualitative grounded theory study on transnational student experiences may not capture an objective "truth" or "reality," I intend to follow a few strategies to improve the "credibility" of the findings. Triangulation has been suggested to improve internal validity through using multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple

theories to confirm emerging findings. Through triangulation of data, I compared and cross-checked data from different sources. In addition, member checks or respondent validation could solicit feedback from my interviewees to check if their experiences have been captured (Maxwell, 2013). As for reliability, or "consistency" or "dependability," I took care to document my interview, categorization, coding, and decision process.

In Chapter One's section on assumptions and researcher positionality, I explained my reflexivity, dispositions, and biases clearly to the readers. In this way, the readers could better understand how my values and expectations influenced the procedures and outcomes of this dissertation research (Maxwell, 2013). By providing "rich" and "thick" descriptions that contextualize the study and providing sufficient information about "self as an instrument, research context, participants, and the researcher-participant relationship," I hope the readers could decide how the findings may transfer (Morrow, as cited in Fraenkel et al., 2019, p.393).

Furthermore, I explained the maximum variation strategy which could enhance transferability by including a greater variation or diversity in the characteristics of my research participants: different gender, home countries, and host countries. Providing variations on different dimensions of interest could allow a greater range of application by readers or consumers of the research (Patton, 2015, p.267). I hope the results may offer transferable values to the educational practitioners helping students who will need to transition into transnational learning spaces.

5. Ethics and Confidentiality

Ethical issues in qualitative research are important and should be considered throughout the research process (Crewell & Poth, 2017). Prior to conducting the study, I applied for and obtained approval from Boston College' Institutional Review Board (IRB). I completed the IRB

ethical training program (CITI) and was supervised by my faculty advisor, professor Hans de Wit. Before starting the interview, I ensured the questions and interview process did not cause discomfort for participants through practicing the questions with my colleagues during multiple sessions. At the beginning of the study, I disclosed the purpose of the study to the schools and participants. I emailed a consent letter to each participant and refrain from pressure from participants into signing consent forms.

During data collection, I respected and avoided exploitation of participants, and I was aware that I am older and might be respected in polite ways in traditional Asian cultures. I provided both financial rewards for participating and attended to opportunities for reciprocity. Importantly, participants' identifiable information (their names and emails) only appeared on consent forms, after which a pseudo-name was assigned to each participant, and no data could be identifiable. Their consent forms were stored in the password-protected Boston College server. I am the only person directly involved in the study and have access to the raw data.

I attended to ethical considerations during processes of conducting data analysis, reporting the data, and publishing a study. I reported multiple perspectives and contrary findings. I assigned fictitious names or aliases and composite stories so that individuals cannot be identified or harmed. After finishing the study, I constantly emailed and shared updates with research participants and stakeholders.

6. Preliminary Pilot Study and Expected Outcomes

I consider myself to be a fortunate dissertation writer because I had accumulated research experiences from a pilot project. It helped me test and refine the design, procedures, instruments, and analysis plan of the final study (Yin, 2016). In the summer of 2021, I was commissioned by the Council of International Schools to conduct an exploratory mixed-method study on how

COVID-19 impacted international school graduates' transition into higher education (). Data were drawn from ten student interviewees and 48 survey responses from international schools in Asia and Europe. All the interviewees were either studying entirely online mode in countries different from their university locations or in hybrid mode on campus.

The preliminary findings on college transition during the pandemic suggested that while all the students entered universities with an online-learning component, their physical locations resulted in vastly different first-year satisfaction and experiences. Although all students were dissatisfied with online learning, studying in different time zones was particularly detrimental to students' mental and physical health. Maintaining a strict routine, engaging with normal society, and locating peers through social media platforms were the most effective strategies to support their transitions. This pilot study offered implications for hybrid learning, as it continues to be an important feature in all forms of education and so as they transition from international schools to international higher education (Wang, 2023).

This pilot study allowed me to conceptualize research questions, theory, and methodology to understand multifaced and diverse international student groups for this dissertation. The preliminary findings suggest that these IB students are linguistically capable and academically successful. The students from Asia would encounter more complex challenges regarding changes in racial and gender roles. So my dissertation questions now explore a more complex analysis of the transition process and identity formation.

One expected research outcome is that the participants may experience the disconnection with local society, as frequently experienced by international students enrolled in universities worldwide. The same situation has been noted in the study of DP students in Ecuador and Hong

Kong (Bittencourt, 2020; Wright & Lee, 2020). As such, the disconnection between students and local reality is a likely finding that will surface in this study.

7. Chapter Three Summary

In this chapter, I began with a discussion on my social constructivist research paradigm or philosophical underpinnings that influenced my choice of qualitative grounded theory for this dissertation. The grounded theory approach offers distinct advantages: I could utilize multiple sources of data, co-construct meaning with the research participants, and generate theories to explain the transition and identity formation process. I explained the criteria for selecting and including research participants so the individuals could offer high-quality data that answer the research questions.

Then I presented the research participants characteristics, including demographics, high school types, university destinations, majors, and future professional preferences. These data show that this group of students are of high academic caliber, of relatively high socio-economic family background, of international orientation, and determined to complete advanced degrees to become professionals worldwide.

To strive for credibility, reliability, and transferability of the findings, I carefully documented the data collection and analysis. Data were analyzed via triangulation and member checks. The entire research process was carried out in ethical ways to protect the participants. I aimed to share the results with the academic, practitioner, and student participant community.

The preliminary findings from my previous pilot study and expected outcomes were also explained to show the origin of the assumptions and the development leading to this dissertation. The next Chapter Four will present an analysis of the secondary data on international students

and IBDP students. It sets the background for understanding the findings and theoretical model in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four: International Student and IBDP Mobility Data and Trends

Chapter Four is the first of the three findings' chapters to introduce descriptive data relating to international student mobility and IBDP student worldwide and in Asia. The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the findings so we can better comprehend the significance of the general transition model in Chapter Five and student transformation in Chapter Six.

In the first part of this chapter, I present and analyze the secondary descriptive data acquired from IB. This section shows the trend and development of IBDP over the past decade, both worldwide and in Asia. In the second part of this chapter, I use data from IIE and UN statistics to compare and show the similarity and differences between worldwide international student mobility and IBDP graduate intentions regarding post-secondary destination countries. I show how IBDP could be used as a proxy for international student trends in international higher education. As such, it suggests that international secondary education offers a crucial pathway for students to enter higher education abroad.

1. IBDP Data Trends Worldwide and Development in Asia

1.1 IBDP graduates' growth are very robust both worldwide and in the Asian Pacific Region

The foremost reason for selecting IBDP population in this dissertation is as follows: IBDP is a well-recognized education program and brand with accurate official data and records, collected and stored by the organization IB. I wrote to IB and requested five types of data to understand the overall trend of IBDP student growth worldwide. More importantly, I requested data on those who graduated from Asian countries and went on to anglophone countries for

university over a ten-year calendar year period (May & November sessions combined) from 2012-2021[1]. To understand the trend of *IB growth* over the past ten years and in the Asia-Pacific region, I present the IB graduates' numbers in the tables and figures below and provide analysis for each of them.

Table 4-1. *IBDP Graduates Numbers, By the Top 15 Countries*

	2012	**2021**	**Growth**	**Growth Rate**
United States	14274	21741	7467	52.3%
United Kingdom	4161	3763	-398	-9.6%
Canada	3249	4508	1259	38.8%
India	1507	4532	3025	200.7%
China	1204	3552	2348	195.0%
Singapore	1540	2982	1442	93.6%
Australia	1684	2382	698	41.4%
Hong Kong	1380	2026	646	46.8%
Spain	783	2812	2029	259.1%
Peru	568	2610	2042	359.5%
Germany	1000	1799	799	79.9%
Switzerland	1089	1619	530	48.7%
Mexico	942	1716	774	82.2%
Ecuador	489	2058	1569	320.9%
United Arab Emirates	597	1925	1328	222.4%

In 2021, the top 15 countries with the most IBDP graduates are the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, India, China, Singapore, Australia, Hong Kong, Spain, Peru, Germany, Switzerland, Mexico, Ecuador, United Arab Emirates (Table 4-1). The only country that experienced a decrease in graduate numbers is the United Kingdom. The U.S. graduated the largest number of IBDP students, nearly five times that of Canada, the second-highest number of IBDP graduates. The 10-year comparison graph (Figure 4-1) clearly displays the leading number

[1] The data is confidential and used only for academic purposes.

of IBDP graduates in the U.S. At the same time, graduates in other countries are experiencing a fast growth rate. A few countries experienced a 200% to 350% growth rate: India, China, Spain, Peru, Mexico, Ecuador, and UAE.

Figure 4-1. *IBDP Graduate Numbers*

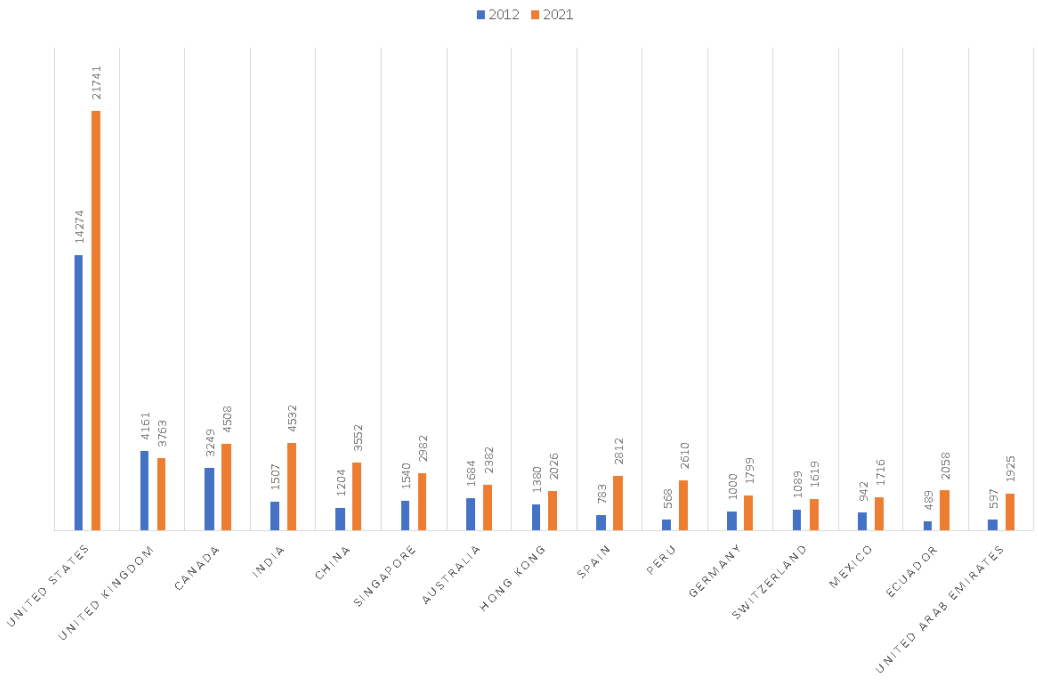


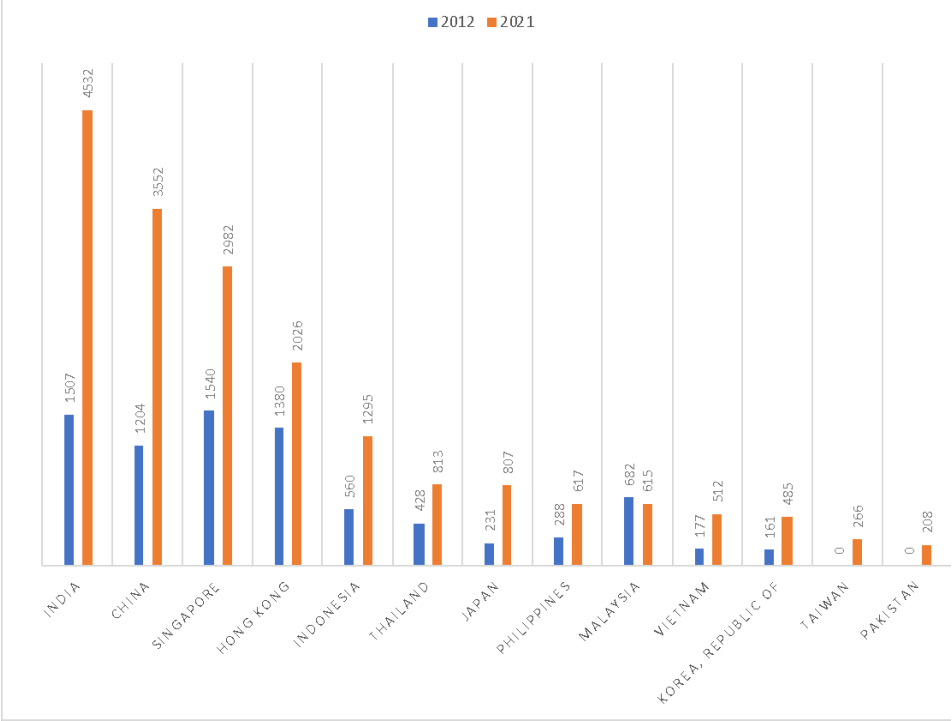
Table 4-2. and Figure 4-2. showcase the IBDP graduates' numbers in Asia. Here I exclude data from Australia and New Zealand, and countries with less than five schools contributing are shown as <5 for data protection reasons. Besides Malaysia, every country has seen a strong growth in IBDP graduate numbers, ranging from 100% to 250%. The countries that stand out with impressive growth are: India (200.7%), China (195%), Singapore (93.6%), Indonesia (131.3%), Thailand (90%), Japan (249.4%), Philippines (114.2%), Vietnam (189.3%), and South Korea (201.2%). This fast speed of growth signals the increased recognition of and demand for IBDP in Asian countries. In countries such as Japan and South Korea, the government supports expanding international IBDP programs in the public school system. Such efforts further promoted the popularity among families that send their children to the IBDP programs.

expanding international IBDP programs in the public school system. Such efforts further promoted the popularity among families that send their children to the IBDP programs.

Table 4-2. *IBDP graduates numbers in the Asia-Pacific region, by country.*

Countries	2012	2016	2021	Growth	Growth rate
India	1507	2500	4532	3025	200.7%
China	1204	2201	3552	2348	195.0%
Singapore	1540	2211	2982	1442	93.6%
Hong Kong	1380	1940	2026	646	46.8%
Indonesia	560	925	1295	735	131.3%
Thailand	428	640	813	385	90.0%
Japan	231	358	807	576	249.4%
Philippines	288	419	617	329	114.2%
Malaysia	682	818	615	-67	-9.8%
Vietnam	177	260	512	335	189.3%
Korea, Republic Of	161	335	485	324	201.2%
Taiwan	<5	<5	266	NA	NA
Pakistan	<5	<5	208	NA	NA

Figure 4-2. *IBDP Graduates in Asia*



1.2 Asian IBDP Graduates' Intention to Pursue Post-Secondary Education in Anglophone Countries and Contexts

Because high school to the university is as a coherent path, after looking at the high growth in graduate numbers I turn to data that indicate students' university destinations. While according to confidentiality agreement, we cannot track individual student data, we could see the aggregate data and the trend over time. So, I requested data on IBDP transcript receiving countries. The caveat in this method is that a student could send multiple transcripts to multiple countries or to the same countries. Nevertheless, because sending a transcript is an effort that requires money and time, it can indicate one student's willingness to study at an institution of the destination country. The transcription data then serves as a good proxy for IBDP graduates' destination after high school.

destination country. The transcription data then serves as a good proxy for IBDP graduates' destination after high school.

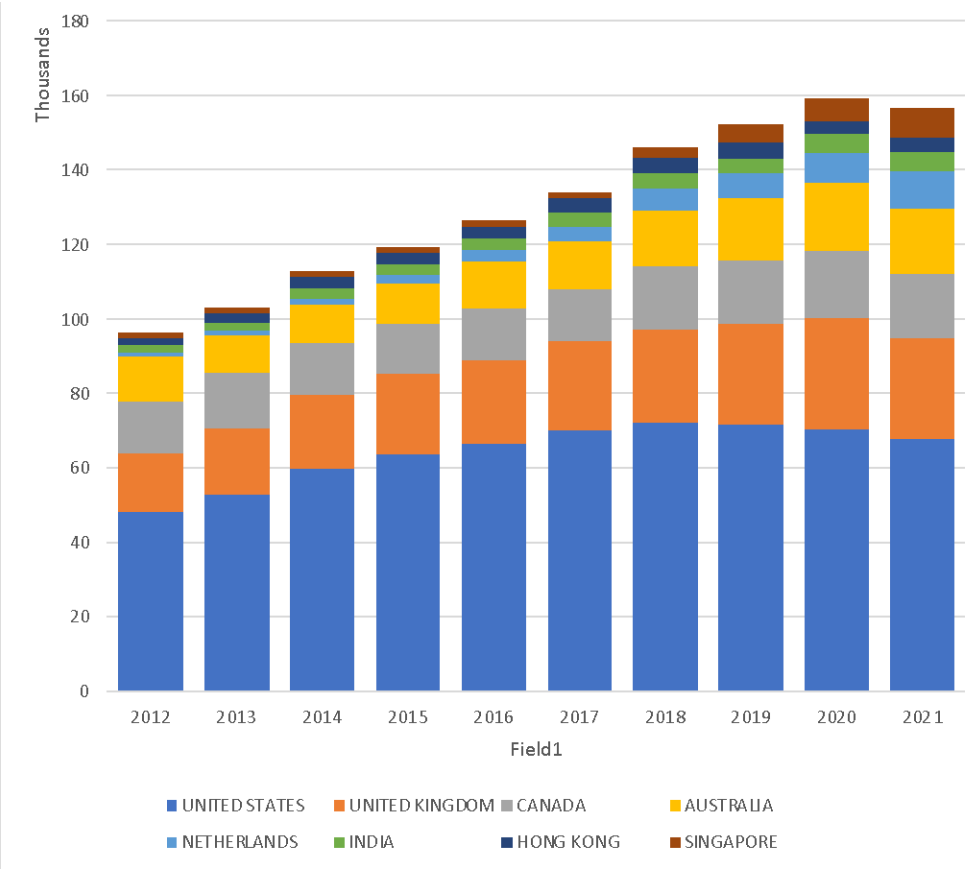
Table 4-3. *IBDP transcripts destination countries, by the top 15 countries*

	2012	2017	2021	Growth	Growth Rate
United States	48318	70037	67851	19533	40.4%
United Kingdom	15820	24121	27077	11257	71.2%
Canada	13817	14062	17374	3557	25.7%
Australia	12096	12650	17674	5578	46.1%
Netherlands	1094	4159	9823	8729	797.9%
India	1937	3563	5126	3189	164.6%
Hong Kong	2034	3771	3846	1812	89.1%
Singapore	1324	1982	7964	6640	501.5%
Spain	269	1555	3884	3615	1343.9%
Germany	851	1411	2845	1994	234.3%
Korea, Republic Of	577	1043	1613	1036	179.5%
Sweden	1007	1123	1272	265	26.3%
Japan	621	1199	1394	773	124.5%
Norway	664	1085	932	268	40.4%
New Zealand	776	854	900	124	16.0%

Table 4-3. shows the IBDP transcripts' destination countries by the top 15 countries. Moreover, Figure 4-3 shows the aggregated data for the top 8 countries over the past ten years. One thing to notice is that the transcripts plateaued or fell between 2020 and 2021. It is partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted worldwide test-taking and transcript-sending services. Secondly, the top transcript-receiving countries are still the traditional anglophone countries: the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. The above data show that these four countries only graduated 73,111 students in 2021 but received over 129,976 transcripts, so many students outside of these countries applied to study in these places. Thirdly, an interesting trend to point out here is the popularity of the Netherlands, Singapore, Spain, and Germany. These countries have seen a fast increase in receiving IBDP transcripts, with a high rate ranging from 234.3% to 1343.9%.

Germany. These countries have seen a fast increase in receiving IBDP transcripts, with a high rate ranging from 234.3% to 1343.9%.

Figure 4-3. *Top 8 IDBP Transcript Destination Countries*



As my dissertation focus on students from Asia, I acquired specific data on the Top Transcript Destination Countries of Students from Asia-Pacific. Table 4-4 and Figure 4-4 demonstrates the data of the top 18 transcript destinations for students combined in the Asia-Pacific region. I soon realized that such data does not tell the story of "Asian students going to anglophone countries," as is the central focus of this dissertation because Australia and New Zealand are included in the Asia-Pacific region. Then I acquired a second set of data from IB, which is still the top transcript destination, but for students from India, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and South Korea. In short,

this list of countries is the fast-developing Asian economies with an expanding secondary education market. Such data offer the most interesting stories on where these students wish to study for higher education.

Table 4-4. *Top 18 Transcript Destination Countries of Students from Asia-Pacific*

	2013	2021	Growth	Growth Rate
Australia	9,508	17596	8,088	85.1%
United Kingdom	4,991	9707	4,716	94.5%
United States	5,349	9123	3,774	70.6%
India	2,208	5075	2,867	129.8%
Canada	2,467	4813	2,346	95.1%
Hong Kong	2,342	3597	1,255	53.6%
Singapore	1,441	7619	6,178	428.7%
Korea, Republic Of	644	1284	640	99.4%
Netherlands	226	1405	1,179	521.7%
New Zealand	848	818	(30)	-3.5%
Japan	331	1026	695	210.0%
Germany	94	328	234	248.9%
Malaysia	86	168	82	95.3%
Ireland	68	207	139	204.4%
Switzerland	118	119	1	0.8%
China	24	228	204	850.0%
France	43	115	72	167.4%
Philippines	21	222	201	957.1%

Figure 4-4. *Top Transcript Destination Countries of Students from Asia-Pacific*

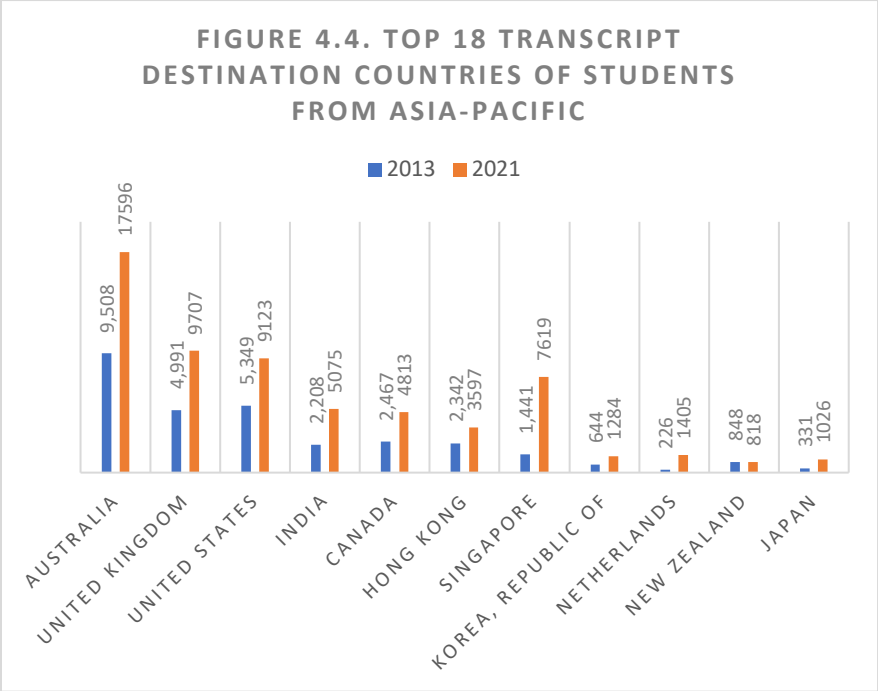


Table 4-5 and Figure 4-5 illustrate the top transcript destination countries for students from India, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and South Korea, the largest Asian student group combined. Table 4-5 displays the data for the top 18 countries, and the bar graph shows the change for the top 10 countries. After excluding Australia and New Zealand from the student group, the top destinations became the United Kingdom, the United States, and India. The transcripts sent to Australia changed from 17,596 to 4,762 in 2021, indicating that many of those applications are from Australia and New Zealand. The top four English-speaking countries' dominating role in the international student market is similarly reflected in the IBDP graduate' preferences. In addition, India, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the Netherlands, with many EMI higher education institutions, also see a rise in transcripts. Similarly, South Korea and Japan. It is even clearer to see the changes in student

preferences using a longitudinal lens, and Figure 4-6 shows the trends of the Top 10 Transcript Destinations for Asian Students.

Table 4-5. *Top 18 Transcript Destination Countries for Asian Students*

	2013	2021	Growth	Growth Rate
United Kingdom	4,413	8,978	4,565	103.4%
United States	4,630	8,078	3,448	74.5%
India	2,182	4,946	2,764	126.7%
Australia	1,630	4,762	3,132	192.1%
Canada	2,225	4,440	2,215	99.6%
Hong Kong	2,201	3,500	1,299	59.0%
Singapore	1,384	7,446	6,062	438.0%
Korea, Republic Of	589	1,234	645	109.5%
Netherlands	200	1,266	1,066	533.0%
Japan	288	974	686	238.2%
Germany	75	271	196	261.3%
New Zealand	66	185	119	180.3%
Malaysia	80	157	77	96.3%
Ireland	64	192	128	200.0%
Switzerland	104	100	(4)	-3.8%
China	15	199	184	1226.7%
Philippines	19	221	202	1063.2%
France	36	93	57	158.3%

Figure 4-5. *Top 10 Transcript Destination Countries for Asian Students*

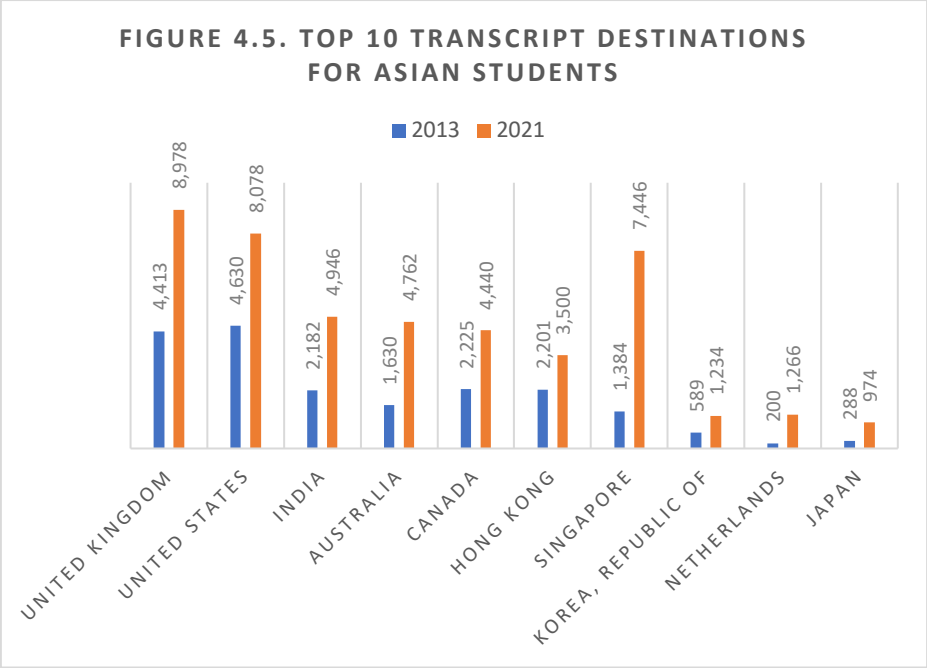
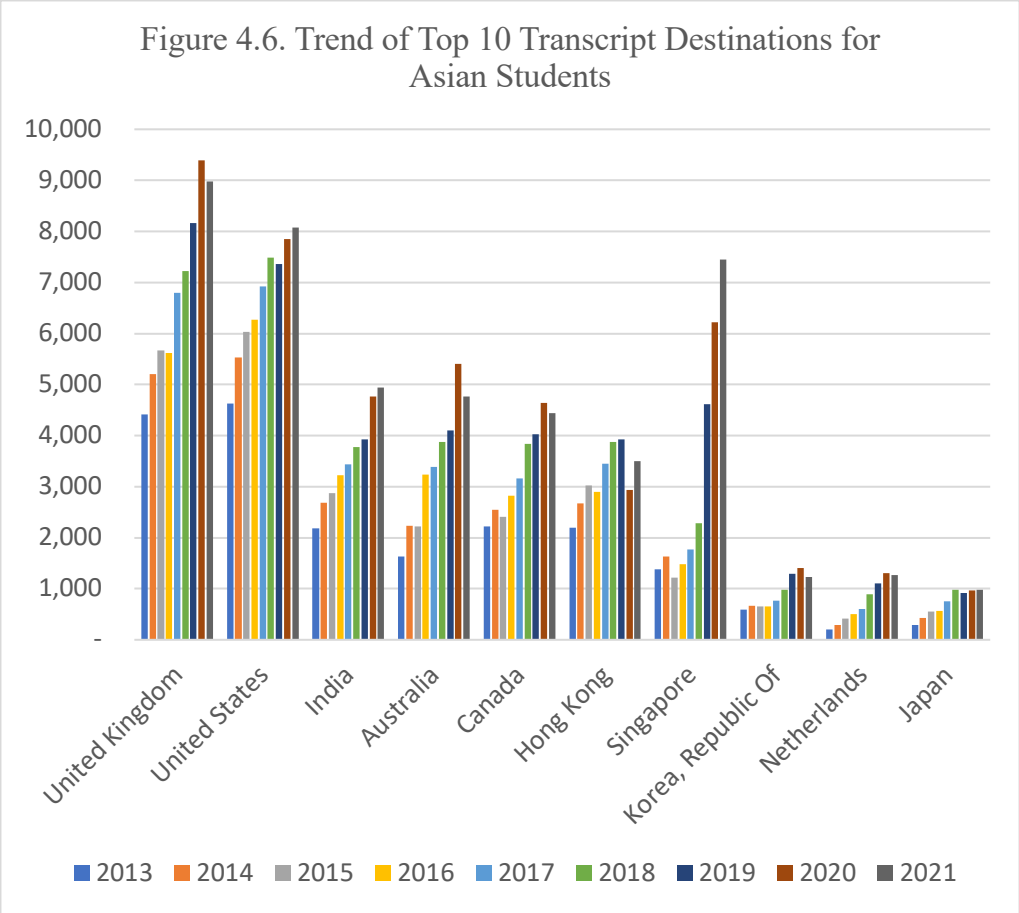


Figure 4-6. *Trend of Top 10 Transcript Destinations for Asian Students*



2. Putting IBDP Data in Perspective: International Student Mobility Worldwide

As the international mobility was disrupted by the 2020 global pandemic onwards, I use data before 2020 for comparison. Before the pandemic, although different calculations on the scale of international student flows have yielded different projections (Altbach & OECD, as cited in de Wit, 2008, chapter 3), all indicate strong growth. According to the most comprehensive data collection covering all types of programs, Project Atlas, over 5.6 million higher education students studied abroad in 2019. As Figure 4-7 demonstrate, Anglophone countries received 47 percent of the share (the United States 20 percent, the United Kingdom 10 percent, Canada 9 percent, and Australia 8 percent) (Institute of International Education, 2020).

percent of the share (the United States 20 percent, the United Kingdom 10 percent, Canada 9 percent, and Australia 8 percent) (Institute of International Education, 2020).

Figure 4-7. *Top International Host Countries*

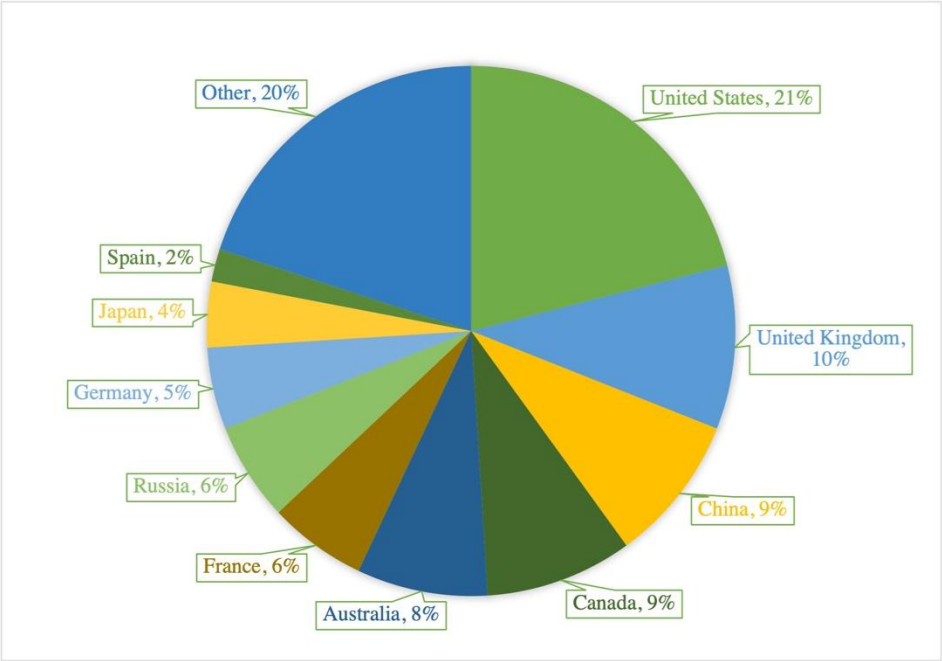
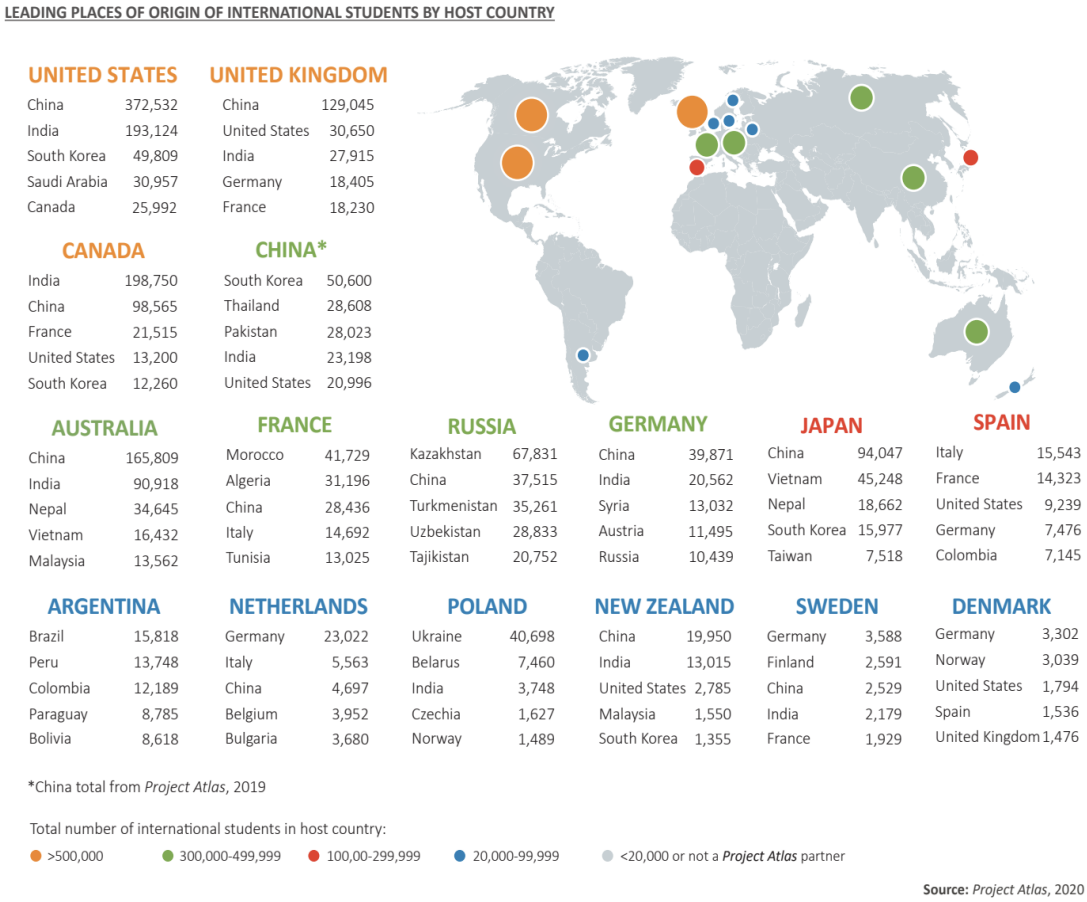


Figure 4-8 is created by Institute of International Education's Project Atlas, showing the leading places of origin of international students. China, India, South Korea, Nepal, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Pakistan are the source countries with the largest number of international students. These data reveal that these international students tended to choose to study in anglophone countries or nearby Asian countries.

These data reveal that these international students tended to choose to study in anglophone countries or nearby Asian countries.

Figure 4-8. *Leading Places of Origin of International Students by Host Country*



Before closely examining the international student data, I must again emphasize the definition issue mentioned in the Literature Review Chapter. According to different ways of definitions and calculations, it is complicated, if not impossible, to obtain accurate data on international student mobility. So we have to work with the most reliable data and start careful analysis from there. Looking at the global data, many organizations do not distinguish between long-term study and short-term educational visits, between secondary and graduate programs, or between degree and certificate students. On the contrary, IB offers more concrete data on

students who have completed high school education. And sending transcripts to an institution signifies a determination that requires money, effort, knowledge, and test preparation. The caveat is that one student may send transcripts to multiple countries or not receive admission and attend the institution after sending transcripts. Still, we can infer student preferences from this action of sending transcripts.

When comparing Asian IBDP graduates and global international student source country data, we see that student home countries correspond to the leading international student home countries, especially from China and India. There are exceptions: Singapore and Hong Kong have a are high number of IBDP graduates, but these two regions do not appear as the top global international student source regions. One reason is that Singapore and Hong Kong are small in size and population, especially when compared to other populous countries and regions, so international students from these places do not make it to the top lists. Secondly, Singapore and Hong Kong are metropolitan megacities, where many internationally employed mobile families live. The international education market is very competitive in these places as well, with many international secondary schools and world-class universities. IBDP is a small and selective secondary program, yet it has grown in Singapore and Hong Kong to meet the high-quality education demand from international and local families. It further suggests how many families wish their children to have an international education, such as IBDP.

Then when we compare the transcript-receiving countries with leading global international host countries, the similarity and differences also tell fascinating stories. Over the years, Asian IBDP students have been sending their transcripts to the top four English-speaking countries: the U.S., UK, Canada, and Australia. What is engrossing is the growth in transcripts

sent to India, Hong Kong, and Singapore, especially with a sudden surge in 2020 and 2021 (Figure 4-6).

There are several reasons for this trend, as these countries and regions have a growing number of Asian IBDP graduates. During the peak of the pandemic, nearly all countries closed borders to international students. Consequently, many Asian students chose to study at an EMI university in their home country or nearby country either willingly (due to the fear of catching COVID-19 before vaccination) or unwillingly (due to government border controls). Because at least one of the official languages used in these regions is English and there are many leading EMI universities, it may be a natural or ideal decision for students to study near their homes.

3. Chapter Four Summary

In this findings chapter, I shared the research findings from IB secondary data. While IBDP shares many similarities with global international student data, there are a few differences in the sending countries and in the receiving countries. In the subsequent findings chapter, I will introduce the international transition model that emerged from the grounded theory approach. The different concept categories, conditions for success, and the outcome will be outlined and discussed. After introducing the general model, the third findings chapter will discuss the heterogeneity in experiences between different types of students.

Chapter Five: The Successful International University Transition Model

> A lot of the time, with this adjustment, there is no answer to it. I've searched on what is it like to attend college. It is a lot of mystery and a lot of unknowns inside. Is this how it's really supposed to be? Am I doing this wrong? And there's no going back. A lot of people end up pushing themselves to study things that they don't want just to get through it. To have more information is definitely something we need. (Helen, a female student from Thailand, studying Psychology at a Canadian University)

As the quotation from Helen shows, international students face many uncertainties in pursuing higher education abroad. They often question whether they have made the right choices or are on the correct path. They wish for more information, guidance, and clarification on this journey. They also want to know if other international students are experiencing similar transitions. *Is this what a successful transition is supposed to be?* To effectively answer this question raised by Helen, we need to rephrase it as *What is a successful international university transition?* As such, a theoretical model that abstracts the meaning from students' lived experiences would provide answers to their questions.

To reiterate, the research question raised at the beginning of this dissertation was: *What theory/model explains how students were able (or not able) to experience a successful international university transition*? The previous Chapter Four analyzed the contextual data on international students worldwide and IBDP students in Asia. It showed the high growth in IBDP alum numbers and their continued intention to study in Anglophone countries. Under this context, it is meaningful to understand the student perspective to facilitate and accommodate their international transitions.

For this reason, this chapter presents The Successful International University Transition Model (The Model), which derives from themes constructed through a cyclical process of

analysis, interpretation, and analysis. The process of arriving at The Model is explained in Chapter Three Research Method's Data Analysis section. I followed Charmaz's (2014) constructivist approach and integrated the systematic approach suggested by Strauss and Corbin (2015). As **Error! Reference source not found.** shows, the Model's components align with the process questions asked during the interview. Figure 5-1 specifies the key categories within the Model, including the causal conditions, intervening conditions, successful transition factors, and successful outcomes.

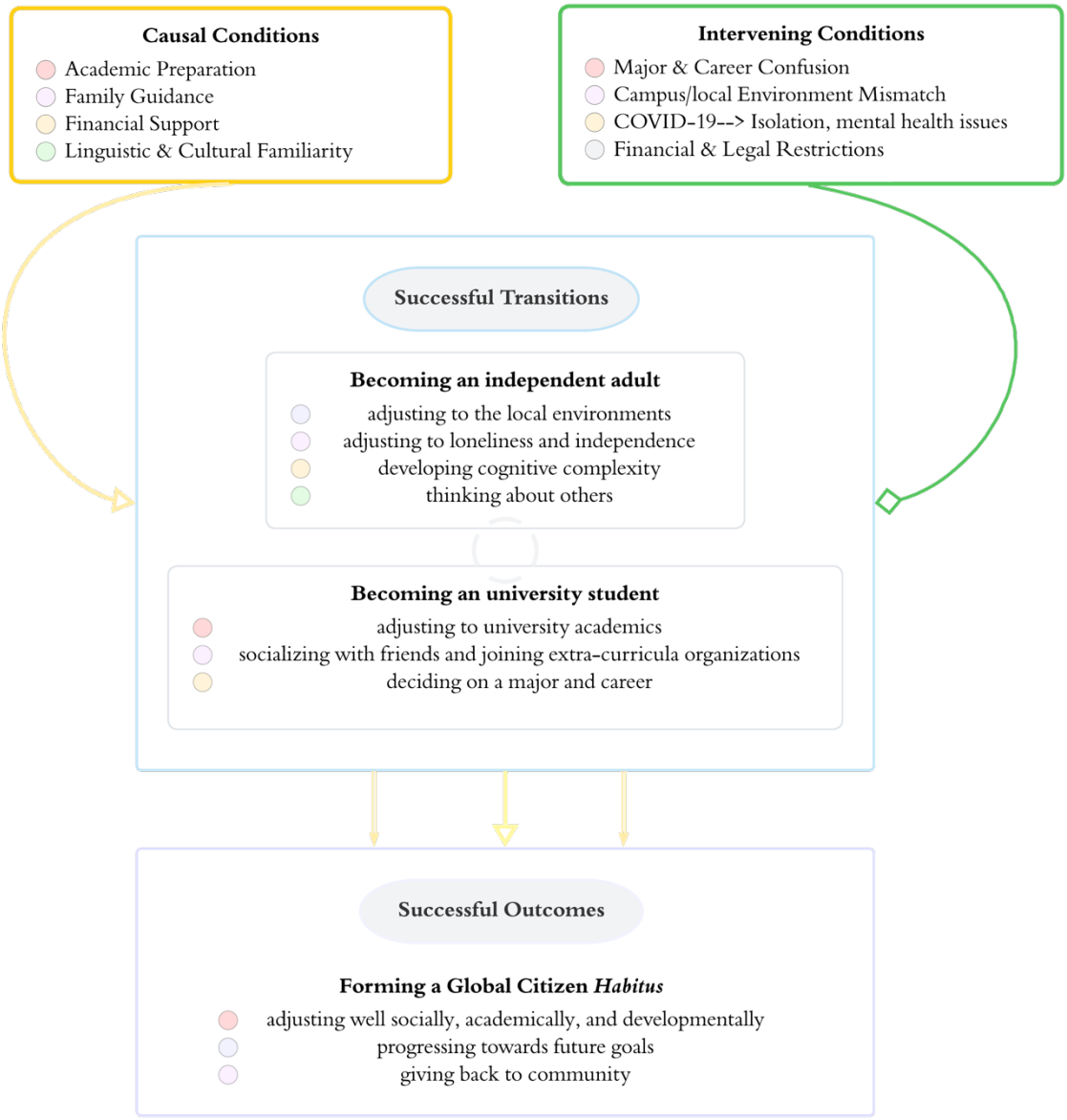
The rest of this chapter is divided in to four main sections, each presents the four components of the model and analyzes the themes, categories, and concepts, along with data from participant interviews. Overall, this Model aims to meet the four central elements that Saldaña (2015) suggests a social science theory should include (p.277):

1. it *predicts and controls action* through an if-then/when-then/since-that's why logic
2. it *accounts for variation* in the empirical observations (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014, pp. 66-7)
3. it explains *how/or why something happens* by stating its cause(s) and outcomes(s)
4. it provides *insights and guidance* for improving social life (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p. 11).

Table 5-1. *Key Themes, Categories and Elements in the Model*

Questions regarding the successful transition process	**Themes and Categories**
What were important pre-transition factors?	**Causal Conditions:** o Academic preparation o Family guidance o Financial support o Linguistic and cultural exposure
What were the major events?	**Central Phenomena:** o Becoming an independent adult (exception cases: those who have attended boarding schools or lived at home during university). o Becoming a university student.
What were the main obstacles and the strategies?	**Intervening Conditions:** o Learning and adjusting to independence at a new country: loneliness, finances, personal issues, future careers. o Learning to be a university student during the pandemic: social isolation, mental health issues, choosing a major.
Who were the most important people?	o High school: friends, teachers, mentors o University: friends, classmates, affinity group, professors, mentors, religious groups o Family and family's social networks.
What were the outcomes?	**Outcomes:** Forming a global citizen habitus: o adjust well socially, academically, and developmentally. o progress towards future goals. o give back to society.

Figure 5-1. *The Successful International University Transition Model*



1. The Central Phenomenon

Successful International University Transition is the central phenomenon generated through my grounded theory analysis. This concept refers to the situation in which a young adult undergoes minimal or few challenges in their academic and social interaction environments. This study set out to understand the process of university transition. However, very early during the

data collection, it became clear that the transitions contained not only the experiences of entering university but, more importantly, experiences of becoming an adult in a new environment. Being an emerging adult entails more complicated experiences and being a university student is one sub-task.

In this section, I will describe two themes of the central phenomenon to address each of the categories. Understandably, the causal conditions of academic preparation, family guidance, financial support, and cultural and linguistic familiarity positively contributed to a smooth transition to becoming an adult and a university student. Furthermore, the intervening conditions of choosing a major/career, campus environment (mis)match, legal/immigration restrictions, and COVID-19-related issues all affected students' transition process. And I will address these conditions in later sections of the chapter.

1.1 International Transition: Becoming a University Student

The first theme within the central phenomenon is the becoming an international student at a university. The participants encountered similar experiences as other international university students, including social-cultural and academic adjustment (Gümüş et al., 2020; Jing et al., 2020). Depending on the type of university they attend, they experience different campus cultures and context-specific interactions. Moreover, whether there existed a proper alignment between the campus environment/culture and the individuals affected their transitions. For all the participants, there were three categories associated with their transitions as an international university student:

- *Adjusting to university academics*
- *Socializing with friends and joining organizations*
- *Deciding on a major and career*

Every interviewee mentioned these three categories and related challenges as they transitioned into university. The situation for each student was context specific. Some students needed two or three semesters, while others needed a few weeks of the first semester to adjust to the curriculum, teaching, and learning.

> In my second year, I felt I was finally learning a lot of things and actually felt studying. It really set me in the zone of study. Diana

> Classes were tough at the beginning, and I just wasn't used to the whole take responsibility for your own learning thing. Sophie

> When you're in person, it's easier to make friends, and talk to people. But also, it's a lot harder to focus. Because you're struggling to take notes in the professor's talking fast. And it's hard to keep up and online. If you want to watch a recorded lecture, you could pause the lectures and do it at your own pace.

> There are no big surprises. the main surprise was how quickly I settled into living independently on campus. It didn't really feel I meant to have to live on my own. that's the only main surprise I got straight into it with academics and stuff. Everything transition-wise was pretty smooth. Allen

These short examples suggest that the journey to becoming a university student varies. The causal and intervening conditions influence why and how university adjustment differed. These factors leading to or impeding successful university transitions will be explained in detail in the subsequent sections.

1.2 International Transition: Becoming an independent adult

The second theme is becoming an independent adult during a transnational journey. As shown in The Model in Figure 5-1, there are four categories under the main theme:

- *Adjusting to the local environment*

- *Adjusting to loneliness and independence*
- *Developing cognitive complexity*
- *Thinking about others*

Depending on the participants' circumstances, the processes and levels of challenges would differ. For example, four students did not live on campus but lived with family members during the transition period. In their cases, adjusting to loneliness and independence was not frequently mentioned because they were surrounded and supported by relatives. The sections on intervening conditions will detail the tasks of adjusting to the local environments. In this section, I emphasize the importance of *adjusting to loneliness and independence* and *developing cognitive complexity*.

1.2.(1) Adjusting to loneliness and independence in a new environment

The category relating to adjusting to loneliness and independence included the following sub-categories: *living alone as a challenge, learning to live responsibly (including managing time, handling multiple tasks, making important decisions), and supporting others*. These categories emerged from interview questions on "in what ways do you think you have changed since starting university?", "what stresses do you perceive?" and "what are the strengths you have developed over the past few months?"

Learning to live independently is a common challenge for students new to a country. For the first time in life, they are responsible for their lives. They need to sort out all the logistics, such as booking flight tickets, finding a residential place, opening a bank account, getting a new cell phone sim card, booking travel, cooking, and doing laundry. Students believed these tasks, though troublesome, were simple tasks that could be dealt with relatively easily.

> For me, the transition stress was shifting from Singapore to the UK and starting a new phase of life. That was a big stress. Also, initially adjustment to the new responsibilities that I

> would have had alongside studying was another challenge to do. I was not only studying, but I was managing finances, cooking, doing a lot of things simultaneously. That was a skill that is important, but it's very difficult to learn. That is something that I do look back and feel happy about. Because if I had just given up, I wouldn't have learned a lot of skills that I have now. Patrick

Similar to Patrick, other students reflected on the same source of stress of moving into a new country alone. Ana, from Thailand, studying at a large public university in the U.S., observed how her local student peers were supported by their parents while she was not. She explained her thoughts well and succinctly.

> I was really stressed. Because usually when people go to university for the first time, their parents would drop them off. I was alone. And I've never been to the US before. It's my first time there alone, so it was stressful figuring everything out by yourself. I panicked a lot. But it was it was a good experience. I should have done that alone. And now I know what to do and what not to do when traveling.

More importantly, being away from familiar family and friends and learning to be alone was even more challenging. As my other paper publication has shown, the students who went through the pandemic phase experienced this change most profoundly (Wang, 2023). Even after the pandemic restrictions were lifted and the students arrived on campus, participants explained their thoughts on the lonely condition and how they adjusted.

> I realized that there are a lot of times when you might feel lonely, you might feel alone. And you might be going through a dilemma or a break down, and you have just no one to talk to. For example, my parents live in Singapore. There's a 12-hour gap and I can't speak to them at all. And my friends who are in different parts of the world, who are busy doing their own studies, are not always free to have a chat with me. Roland

> I think that getting used to that aloneness and being able to get through challenges when you're alone, I think was very important and to have that kind of mental fortitude of

> independence and just learning that being alone is a way that you are becoming independent, I think was a big challenge. Sophie

> I felt a little bit lonely socially, because it took me a while to find friends, and felt left out. I felt I had to be more social. And I wasn't. I was comparing myself to other people. And I felt I was behind in terms of socially and making friends. And it was stressful. I wasn't able to make as much progress there as I would have wanted. Allen

In many cases, students explained that being in a different country away from their family and support group was stressful and challenging. They identify that being alone is "a challenge" and "a stress." At the same time, they developed the maturity to acknowledge that learning to deal with those challenges is part of being an adult and independent. The mindset and ability to adapt to those conditions help them experience smooth international transitions.

1.2.(2) Developing cognitive complexity as an adult

Another significant category under the theme of becoming an adult is the category of *developing cognitive complexity*. In short, this concept refers to how students have changed or grown psychologically. It encompasses a young adult's ability to recognize, compare, and articulate the transformation after arriving at the new environment. In some respects, *developing cognitive complexity* overlaps with other categories. Within this theme, the sub-categories are *knowing about myself, managing stress and emotions, realizing what I need to do and change, and knowing about others*. These sub-categories are not linear or sequential developmental stages but are interrelated and sometimes lead to each other. These data are derived from answers relating to "what do you value about yourself now?", "how have you grown in the past few months?" and "what are your goals and wishes?"

Knowing about myself is the most frequently mentioned code in this research. Nearly all participants shared how they now see their strengths, weaknesses, and personalities differently after entering university.

> I became very humbled in university. And that was both from experiencing new people and just the course material itself. before University, I always assumed I knew everything. And, I was I would always think that I'm the smartest kid in the room. But, you know, going to university, that's not the case. I think part of it, part of what humbled me in the classroom was, you know, our professors would always say something, especially in theology that we know nothing in theology, but we do we do know things, but there's a lot of things that because you're dealing with abstract ideas, you can't really have any absolute knowledge or even challenging the idea that there is absolute knowledge anyways. Jack

> I think through different experiences that I've had, I'm able to communicate with different people. And also maybe let others know about my experience so that others can learn and vice versa. I can also learn from other people's experience. Camila

> Because I feel other people can't really help me as much as I can help myself. When I'm stressed and hearing comforting words from others, it does nothing for me, until I convinced myself that it's going to be okay. I feel nobody can really help us. I feel myself because I've realized that that's what works best. But I think I've definitely gotten better at being maybe kinder to myself and being realistic. And taking it day by day instead of just thinking all the time. Ashley

> I know I will feel uncomfortable, and I will keep on worrying. So do whatever you can to make life easier for yourself to go through. If I need to clean my room, I'll clean my room. If I need to move off campus, I'll move on move off campus. I just did whatever I needed to survive. And it made me feel I had a sense of agency and had autonomy over my decisions. Sophie

Being exposed to a new environment and interacting with different people contributed to their sense of cognitive complexity. Many students who grew up in a more international

environment have been exposed to diverse cultural influences. Nonetheless, moving to a new environment for higher education provides these young adults with exposure to new ideas, cultures, traditions, values, religions, and customs.

In addition to exposure, interaction is a higher-level action item facilitating their cognitive complexity development. Interacting and communicating with peers, faculty, and even local community residents allow them to learn how to cooperate with others in difficult situations. Students became more accommodating and respectful of different people and values. They found ways to work and live together in multicultural settings, significantly contributing to the transition outcome. Many students see their growth as a result of living with people who do not share the same belief system:

> My roommate and I, for instance, believed in very different things. Everyone has grown up differently and comes from different places. They don't talk to you with the intention of being rude or antagonizing. We lived together at the very least even if we didn't agree with each other very few. But we were still able to respect each other. And that's very important, especially when you're living in a place as multicultural as Vancouver. Michelle

> I need to be more accommodating and respectful of different cultures and values. Because at the end of the day, we have to work together and live together. I realized the importance that they have, which has definitely brought a change. Patrick

Various exposure and interaction make them more aware of their personality, values, and likes and dislikes. Students often mentioned that they now know they could change and improve, which is a crucial step toward achieving their future goals.

> Going into university, I was mainly focused on academics, and trying to, get the highest GPA, but now I realized that university is much more than that. It's a truly holistic experience. it's as much about meeting people and forming connections as it is taking classes academically. And then professionally, my goal was always to do the best I could.

> London is such an independent city, that you have to take matters into your own hands. No one's going to be handing you fruit in this silver platter. And, you want to make friends you have to put yourself out there. I'm able to forgive myself for some of the things that I things that I do, which weren't necessarily right, be handling, friendships and relationships, or messing up and thinking exam. I used to, blame myself a lot for all of these things. I thought, maybe I could do better. But one thing I've learned too is become kinder to yourself. And that's something I value now. Greg

> I valued my mom's or my family's opinion a lot. But now the impact is less so because I'm a grown up now. I'm an adult, and I can make the decisions. And again, it's my life, I do need to be the one who is in control of what I want to do in my life. Camila

In summary, the successful international transition included important related tasks: becoming a university student and independent adult. Students going through the transnational university journey experience various challenges. In particular, *adjusting to loneliness and independence*, and *developing cognitive complexity* are two essential categories in becoming an independent adult. By adjusting and overcoming these challenges, these young mobile adults move towards the ideal outcome of becoming global citizens.

2. The Successful Outcome

Let us now turn to the outcome of the process model: after the international transition, a young adult can form a *global citizen habitus*. Global citizen is a somewhat nebulous and abstract concept and there is little consensus on its meaning. Various organizations, institutions, and scholars have employed and advocated for concepts around *the global citizen, global citizenship, and global citizenship education.* Yet, there is not one shared and precise definition. At the same time, many international organizations and universities openly state that cultivating global citizens is the goal and outcome of education. For example, according to the United Nations, global citizenship is a target embedded in Sustainable Development Goal Number 4

(SDG4). SDG4 is set to ensure Inclusive and Quality Education for All and Promote Lifelong Learning by 2030[2]:

> Global citizenship is the umbrella term for social, political, environmental, and economic actions of globally minded individuals and communities on a worldwide scale. The term can refer to the belief that individuals are members of multiple, diverse, local and non-local networks rather than single actors affecting isolated societies.
> Promoting global citizenship in sustainable development will allow individuals to *embrace their social responsibility to act for the benefit of all societies, not just their own*.
> Universities have a responsibility to promote global citizenship by teaching their students that they are members of a large global community and can use their skills and education to contribute to that community.

Scholars worldwide have endeavored to theorize and abstract concepts and meanings (Goren & Yemini, 2017;). For instance, Dill (2013) recommended two approaches with different goals. One is the global competencies approach, which focuses on the necessary skills to compete in a global society. Another is the global consciousness approach, which concentrates on the global orientation of empathy and cultural sensitivity. Morais and Ogden (2013) presented a Global Citizenship Conceptual Model and Global Citizenship Scale with three overarching dimensions frequently mentioned in the literature: social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement. Moreover, Lilley et al. (2015) established clear *markers* for being Global Citizens, who have the ability to

- leave comfort zone,
- thinks differently (uses moral and ethical reasoning in problem-solving and recognizes common humanity and environmental sustainability),
- engage beyond the immediate circle of peers, family, and friends,
- show a mature attitude and initiative, and

[2] https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/global-citizenship

- consider self, life, others, and careers, and the world beyond narrow expectations.

Although differences of definitions still exist, we could see that there appear to be some agreement that *global citizen education* indicates a set of idealistic competencies and abilities that young adults could possess through education. In this way, the suggested *markers* by Lilley et al. (2015) are comparable to the ideal goals in IB Learner Profile. IB Learner Profile is an open statement and commitment to help all school community members learn to respect themselves, others, and the world around them. The profile aims to develop IB learners with ten attributes: Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Risk-takers, Balanced, and Reflective. These ten attributes provide a direction for student development and aspiration. After the IB education, my participants have internalized these corresponding values and goals. They frequently refer to those attributes and IB profile when telling their stories.

This dissertation does not intend to define or redefine *global citizens* or *global citizenship education*. While remaining aware of the controversies around this concept, I choose to use *global citizen habitus* to denote global competencies and consciousness (Dill, 2013). Further, I emphasize the sociological term *habitus*, as I explained the decision on word choice in the Research Method Chapter's coding section. Through international transition experiences, the students develop the *habitus*, a notion that describes their pattern of thoughts, tastes, preferences, and dispositions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). As such, the *global citizen habitus* is a mediating concept capturing the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality between the individual and the social world (Wacquant, 2005). Society becomes deposited in persons through lasting dispositions or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel, and

act in determined ways, guiding them in their creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant environment. As global citizens, students could:

- Adjust well socially, academically, and developmentally after a successful international transition.
- Despite the challenges and confusion, they could progress toward their future academic and professional goals and aspirations.
- Importantly, they also consider their abilities and roles and how they could contribute to the community and society.

3. Causal Conditions

So far, this chapter has focused on the central phenomenon and the outcome in the Successful International University Transition Model. The strategic reason for choosing a grounded theory approach is that it allows me to address the "how" and "why" questions and explain the phenomena under certain circumstances. Accordingly, the following sections will focus on the "how" and "why" conditions that would lead to or impede the transitioning experiences. I will begin with the *causal conditions*: academic preparation, family knowledge, financial support, and linguistic and cultural familiarity. As noted in Table and Figure, these four categories contribute to a successful transition. In contrast, the lack of these conditions indicates that young adults may encounter more challenges and difficulties.

3.1 Academic preparation: IBDP as an effective program in international university transitions

Academic preparation, one factor in determining student success in higher education (Museus, 2014; Perna, 2006), is also identified in this study on international student transitions. The data show that IBDP contributed to university academic success during the international

transitions in three ways: curriculum similarity, writing training, and soft skills development. In some cases, universities accept IB credit transfers, so the students may shorten their time in university and save on university tuition.

Both the students who attended the diverse international high schools and those who attended localized high schools perceived IBDP to be very helpful in college preparation. IB's curricula and subject exams are considered one of the most academically rigorous by worldwide educators. Despite the challenges and difficulties in learning IB, the participants affirmed the value of this high school pathway program. After passing IB's high-level exams, when students entered universities, most of them found the course content to be not so difficult. Many felt that they had learned the content in high school.

> I'd say that the IB really helped me during my first semester because all of the contents were very similar to the IB program. And having done the coursework for IB, I felt very prepared there my first semester. (Nicole, from Nepal, studies biology in a large university in Hong Kong)

> Because I took psychology and IB content wise, it prepared me a lot I knew about I knew briefly about the research methods, I knew briefly about different psychological fields, different psychological approaches. So that definitely provided me with the base knowledge required to understand the lecture contents much in a much easier manner. (Nick, from Hong Kong, studies Psychology in a large university in the UK)

In addition to the challenging curriculum contents, participants perceived skills relating to time management, multi-tasking, public speaking, and essay writing as valuable preparation for higher education. Having learnt IB in English provided them with an advantage, especially for students who joined IB after the middle school level (e.g., after MYP years).

> It taught me a lot of skills that are transferable to what I'm doing today. Because not just academic skills, but also time management skills, which I find very important, as well as in

terms of the academic skills writing critical thinking. I felt that the way it was structured with the six courses was also quite balanced. (Patrick, from India, studies to be a doctor at a large university in the UK.)

In IB there's much more emphasis on writing and that really helped the university, when it comes down to things writing essays and doing independent research. Or just thinking outside of the box, which a lot of Western universities encourage. I think that's one way the IB really helped me prepare, as opposed to a lot of the American students who went through just the American system AP, they don't. (Jack, from Indonesia, studies religion at a small liberal arts college in the U.S.)

IBDP had a lot of similarities to university. As an engineering student, I realized that a lot of courses have a lot of assignments, quizzes, and tests going on, which require you to keep putting continuous effort, effort every day into it. How to manage a tough schedule was what IB diploma taught me. (Roland, from India, studying to be an engineer at a medium-sized university in Canada)

In terms of critical thinking skills, it definitely prepared me thinking with my multiple perspectives, thinking every single thing through multiple different lenses. When I took writing courses in college, I didn't struggle as much because whenever there was a prompt, I knew immediately how to tackle that prompt for an essay, whereas a lot of my peers struggled. I had an advantage over a lot of my friends. (Ellen, from Vietnam, studies International Relations at a large university in the U.S.)

3.2 Family guidance as key factors in international university transitions

My data show that family support and guidance are the most significant factors influencing students' international transition journey. Although the participants come from relatively high SES families, there are differences among participants' university preparation and choices, and cultural capital may play a prominent role. Participants trusted and followed the advice of their experienced family members on choosing a well-matched country, university, major, and future career choice. On the other hand, many students also believed their parents have incorrect and outdated advice, so they must figure out a path independently.

3.2.(1) "My dad is heavily involved in our university processes and made sure everything was the best it can be and showed the best version of myself"

As explained in Chapter Three, the sociological term "family cultural capital" summarizes family knowledge and expectation. Studies have found that students from high SES backgrounds are advantaged in college preparation and choice because they rely on family and friends for college information. People in their connection and network attended college and could share their experiences on college preparation and enrollment. In addition, a few parents are fluent in English, so they acquired information and provided guidance on the application process.

> During my college application process my dad was heavily involved in making sure my essays were good he would proofread them, he would make sure everything was the best it can be and showed the best version of myself. Chloe.

> My dad is not doing engineering anymore. But he always tells me that he likes study engineering, and he thinks it's a good field, because it's a very practical skill and you can build onto it in many other professions. It develops a lot of your critical thinking. That's what he told me. He is quite familiar with the universities in the US. He guided both my brother and I to apply to Australia, Canada in the US. (Helen, a female student from Thailand, studying engineering at a large public school in the U.S.)

> My parents went to PhD programs in the U.S., and they also extend their postdoc in the U.S as well. So they had a really long experience living in and studying in the U.S. That's also why they want me to go to college in the US. Megan

> My dad especially invested in our university process. He was very worried, and he does a lot of research and sometimes he attended information sessions they offered about colleges and stuff that. And my dad was the more invested person. He was helping my brother and my sister choose. Lily

> When it came to applying to colleges, I had an idea of what universities I wanted to go, but really, it was what my parents have taught me many years back, my dad has always wanted

> me to go to this university. And from a young age, he was you should try to this is this should be your school but not Harvard, or Yale, or Princeton, or anything. It was this university. And then when I got to high school, and people asked "Where do you want to go?" I would say this university because that's how I was raised by my dad. So, I don't know how much of it is me and how much it is my parents. It's not they forced me really said I had to go somewhere it was me choosing, but my choice was influenced by or their preferences if that makes sense. Allen

3.2.(2) "I wanted to follow my parents' footsteps"

Some students were influenced by their parents in choosing a major and profession. They trusted their parents' knowledge and expertise. These students believed their parents had created a comfortable life, so they wished to be like them.

> I've always wanted to be my dad. He also studied mechanical engineering. From a young age, I wanted to be him. It's not they pressured me into studying this. It's very much I wanted to be him. (Charlie, a male student from Vietnam, studying mechanical engineering at a large private university in the U.S.)

> I wanted to follow my parents' footsteps. They enjoyed their time studying in the US. (Ana)

> My eldest brother is studying medicine. And my twin brother is study Civil Engineering. My dad was pushing for me to study law because he wanted a lawyer in this house, whenever there is something comes up that he could easily refer to me for help. That was quite a big push towards me switching to law. (Greg)

> My brother is already a medical student. My parents did make him choose medicine and they had a lot of influence with his choice. But for me, they were like "we have forced him and we don't want to do the same, so you can decide whatever you want." That's what happened for me. (Serena)

Interestingly, there are exceptions, as the students chose different paths from their parents. Because their parents are successful in their work and disciplines, the participants did not want to be compared with their parents.

> If I was a scientist, I will be being compared with them, because they have PhDs and they have their postdoc in Stanford. People will compare my weaknesses or my shortcomings with their successes. Because we are in the same field. That's not what I want. So, I chose another field, and I'm more interested with social sciences instead of sciences. Megan

3.2.(3) "My family don't understand… because it's a totally different world for them"

Despite being from high SES families, one group of participants stated that they must rely on themselves to find the right majors and careers in a new country. In addition to learning about the rules and customs of university, these young adults realized they need reconcile the differences between their parents' perceptions and the new reality. I use Chapter Six to analyze and explain how students overcome this challenge and form their agency.

> But in terms of the specifics of planning for college, specifically, my parents have very outdated information. And they didn't know that it was outdated. So sometimes they would tell things or pretend or think they know things that really are no longer the case. And I had to sort of realize on my own that they had a very outdated perception of US colleges. So generally speaking, it was good guidance, but on specific level, it was sometimes bad advice as well. They feel they need to guide me, and they want to be involved. So, they feel they have to say something. So even if they don't have perfect information about what it is. And then, that's how some outdated information comes out. It feels they have to give some input that leads to some sketchy advice. Allen

> In Southeast Asia, there's this very big trend of getting married early. My mom got married when she was 21. And I'm going to be 21 In two years, but I will not get married in two years. So, for my parents, it's another world as well. When I was younger, I used to get upset at my parents a lot because they didn't understand me. I felt very alone because of it. But when I grew older, I realized that it's not their fault. They don't understand because it's a different world for them. I think I grew a lot in that aspect as well. And I think first generation students' kind of understand later on about it. Nicole

> My dad was very much the traditional Chinese parent: "I only know three schools: Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and you have to get into one of those." My dad was very much that. My

parents were not very knowledgeable in colleges of the US. They weren't interested in learning more. I think they were interested in their own perceptions of colleges in the US, but they weren't interested in expanding those perceptions and a lot of the stuff. Since I was a kid, I knew that a lot of the struggles that I had to go through on my own, because a lot of the hurt that I have is because it was perpetuated by my family. Sophie

3.2.(4) "My parents knew what I was going through"

Besides family knowledge and information about the environment and higher education institutions, participants frequently discussed other types of intangible family support, including giving encouragement, emotional support, and being role models.

> Yeah, so my parents studied in the States. Because of that, they were really big proponents of studying abroad. Because my dad interacts with everyone, he is always open to meeting new people and always encouraging. He said: "you're studying abroad, you have to meet different people." That's a big drive that really helped in my transition. So yeah, parents are a big influence and really helped my transition because they emphasized opening up. Jack

> My mom has done a doctorate in English literature, she did a bachelor's and a master's. And she's gone through what I'm going through right now. My dad is a manager in a shipping industry. He's travelled to a lot of countries, he's talked to a lot of people, and he's socialized with a lot of cultural groups. In my university career, when I scored badly in the exam, or I wasn't feeling very confident about myself, or I was feeling lonely and things like that. My parents knew what I was going through. They helped me lot. Roland

> I think over the values that have been instilled in me by my parents. They're super hardworking and they're very much about helping other people. Because I've always seen them be selfless, I tried to do that wherever I can and making sure that you gave you 100% towards all of your goals. Because they face a lot of struggles as they obviously immigrated to a different country to rebuild their life and stuff that. I think just seeing their struggles and being able to overcome it and be successful in this program. I would like to think their work ethic has rubbed off on me a little bit. Sarah

3.3 Financial Support

In my conversation with these students, financial stress, a common barrier to college student persistence and success, came up less frequently as a source of challenge. It is possible that most participants grew up in upper-middle- and upper-class households. Their family could afford international IB high schools' and foreign universities' tuition and fees. On average, the yearly tuition is around $35,000 at international IB high schools in Asia. While expatriate families' employers paid school tuition for the students; non-expat families paid the full tuition for their children from pocket.

3.3.(1) "The financial aspect is the most stressful and the most taxing part for my family"

This is not to say that finances are not an issue for these students. Instead, financial support is a crucial factor in facilitating their smooth transitions. Students were aware of their financial circumstances, privileges, and statuses. They also discussed their families' sacrifices in helping them to obtain an international higher education degree.

> My tuition is paid for by my parents. I'm very comfortable in terms of spending money in the US, and my mom periodically would wire me money. Not have any worry about how I'm going to live in the US financially was such a help. And I've seen some of my friends struggle with finances, and it's a humbling reminder of how lucky I am. (Sophie, from China, in the U.S.)

> Some international students have a very different lifestyle. A lot of them are very, privileged and snobby, I would say. And some of them are *us,* with more of a humble international background. And those are the kinds of international students that are easier to socialize with. (Allen, from Bangladeshi, in the U.S.)

> Coming to university in the United States is not cheap. My parents worked hard for us to have a roof over our head and food on the table. If you're an international student, it's quite hard to get financial aid. The financial aspect is the most stressful and the most taxing part for my family. They've sacrificed in many other ways, when the thing that comes to mind, for me is the financial burden on my parents, Matt

> One benefit of doing IB was that I had a lot of transfer credits. I realized that I could finish a year early and that would mean a lot less tuition. Because I didn't get a scholarship into this university and the tuition is very expensive. It would make a lot of things easier for me and my parents. Michelle

3.4 Linguistic and Cultural Familiarity

3.4.(1) "The language barrier was never a problem"

Linguistic and cultural familiarity, partially resulting from receiving an IBDP education, was a crucial facilitating factor contributing to international university transitions. During the interview, I asked many questions regarding participants' cultural and language familiarity with the host country, which was aimed to explore whether they encountered the most mentioned barriers facing international students. The data confirmed my hypothesis that these students perceived relatively few linguistic and cultural challenges. Having been educated via the international IB programs with the language of instruction as English, these students could communicate effectively in academic and social circumstances.

> I'm in a very privileged position because my entire life I've grown up studying in English medium schools, and English is my first language at this point, even though I do have my mother tongue and my native languages, I speak English the most and I'm most comfortable expressing myself and at this at this level. So going to America at then was a much more fluent transition, because we did have that same language. The language barrier was never a problem. Chloe

> I didn't think people would understand me if I spoke to them the way I speak to my Indian relatives in English accent. I had to switch it up a bit. But no, it wasn't difficult. And I studied French for about eight years. I speak French and English, which are the two official languages in Canada. So it wasn't very difficult. Michelle

3.4.(2) "I don't think there's a lot of cultural shocks"

When encountering cultural shock in a new environment, most answered, "not so much." For students who mentioned that there existed cultural shocks, they referred to small things in

life, such as the differences in pronouns and ways of interaction. Students also stated that they adjusted to these differences easily and quickly.

> Sometimes Americans are a bit over passionate. When I first get in contact with them, probably I'm more used to was the Asian types the quietness, we don't usually talk much at the very beginning. But they tend to comment on me to praise me or to whatever the discuss about anything they're interested about in front of me at the very beginning of our social interaction, but that's too quick. Yeah, that's part of the cultural shock. But I get used to this very quick. And it's a nice way to get to know others. Megan

> I wouldn't say it was a cultural shock. But I didn't notice the way the people interacted was a bit different from what was in my home countries. And there is nothing negative about it was it was just a different perspective than you notice. Initially, it did take me a while to adjust with regards to how they're saying things and what exactly is going on. I don't think there's a lot of cultural shocks that I've experienced, to be honest. Not that I remember. Patrick

4. Intervening Conditions

Having discussed the *causal conditions*, I now turn to the fourth component of the model, the *intervening conditions*. The *intervening conditions* are broader influences that impact the central phenomenon during international transition journey. Students are likely to encounter challenges, stresses, and confusion due to four intervening conditions: *(1) major and career confusion, (2) campus environment misalignment, (3) COVID-19 impacts, and (4) legal restrictions.*

4.1 Major and career confusions

With guidance and support, some participants found their passion very early in their lives. And through studying at the university and interning at different organizations, some students realized their passions and the career paths they wish to embark on. When they faced a conflict between their true passion and an ideal career, they could reconcile the conflict and articulate their reasons.

> When it comes to professions, I'm still figuring it out. My plan right now is just to study economics and philosophy. I will spend a few years in finance to get some funding for grad school and eventually returning to grad school doing theology (Jack).

> Initially, I wanted to go into academia, study politics, and work for an international organization. But I've soon come to realize that that's not exactly what I want to do for the rest of my life. When I got exposed to the work that law firms do in London, I was enamoured. It is a field that I'm interested in now, and I wish to pursue further. (Greg)

On the other side of the spectrum, other students were much more confused during this journey and experienced much stress. It is not so much about selecting a specific academic discipline, but a sense of confusion on what future career this choice will lead to.

> I'm sometimes lost or don't know what I want to do. Some of my friends already have a lot of internships and jobs during the summer. And I didn't even think to apply to any. So I am a little bit confused and behind on my career…I want to be good at my job. I don't want to be scared if I go into a hard job. People will look down on me if I don't know enough. (Mini)

> One stress that I went through recently was going into summer, everyone was looking for internships and stuff. And most people had some internship. And I applied to many, many, many places, and they all rejected me. So I am very stressed about finding something to put on my resume this summer. Because that's sort of the norm everyone does that. Everyone seemed they were succeeding. And I was not. I thought I would find something quite easily. And I was very disappointed that it was a lot more competitive than I expected. And even now, I still don't have an internship or anything this summer, which is stressful. Because I wasn't able to succeed with that. And maybe they'll reflect future job applications. And it really matters if you can't get an internship now, how are you gonna get a good job after you graduate? So that's the thought process. (Allen)

These students have the intellectual capacity and financial security yet said that they were "very confused about how to apply for internships or what jobs to obtain". They worried about their future and lives after university and may needed guidance and assistance on this process.

The confusion or uncertainty about major and career thus intervene with experiencing a smooth transition.

4.2 Campus Environment (Mis)Alignment

The second intervening condition that students mentioned was how they needed time and a process to adjust to the campus environment. It is important to point out that English language fluency and few cultural shocks do not equal to seamless transition to the campus environment. Participants pointed out that personalities, characteristics, social styles, and political or religious preferences might not align well with the campus atmosphere. In those cases, students felt that "they were different from others" and had to either change or accept themselves as the way they are.

There are several factors that they felt were challenging to adjust to. A few students studying in universities in big cities in the U.S. frequently mentioned the difficulty of adjusting to life *outside* campus. They felt insecure with the prevalent drug usage culture and homeless issues when walking outside.

> Transitioning into a completely different environment was very difficult. I went to a small high school and then BU is this large university. Compared to back when I was in high school where everyone's knew each other. And so that was very challenging to settle in. Moving to a new country was very challenging as well because I've been in Vietnam for so long, and so having to get used to the United States with how they do things and their way of life as well was a transition (Ellen, from Vietnam, studying at a large university in the U.S).

> I expect myself to be that social person. But I find out that I cannot. It's too hard for me. And I'm not sure if my if my mode is the right one in this huge university. The transition of knowing myself and to accepting my own pattern of living took quite a long time (Megan, from China, studying at a large university in the U.S.).

For some students, if the college or university has a culture different from their past learning and living experiences, it could present some challenges. For instance, more introverted students mentioned that they disliked the school party culture and felt they could not socialize well in such a culture. Students from more conservative or traditional background felt the institutions had a too liberal culture to adjust to. This type of condition intervenes with their transition into the campus environment.

> In terms of my college environment, not a huge fan of it. It is a huge party school. When I'm in school, I tend to stay away from partying because I feel it drifts my mind off studying, which takes me more time to get back on track, which I can't do. I feel it's really is a huge waste of time. But my school is a huge party school and they do all sorts of parties, every Thursday, Friday, Saturday. And it's a huge substance use school. Yeah, so that's why it made me feel a lot better that I'm staying off campus. (Diana, from China, studying at a liberal arts college in the U.S)

> The other thing is, I don't know if this is an American thing, or something that's natural for all college campuses, is that it does have a very liberal slant politically. I would consider myself to be left leaning, but there's no attempt to having political objectivity every class is unapologetically teaching everything from a very liberal perspective. And students as well are very liberal. And it's if you have a difference of opinion. People are often quite intolerant of that. So you may as well not share it at all and shut up and pretend that you have everything look at you a little weird, which is fine. (Allen, from Bangladeshi, studying at a large university in the U.S).

4.3 COVID-19 Impacts

The third intervening condition for successful university transition is the macro-level factor that significantly impacted the world, for two academic years from 2020 to 2022. Since all participants experienced university transitions during the pandemic, it is crucial to include COVID-19's impact. Details on the specific impacts were covered in my pilot research projects

and a subsequent paper (Wang, 2023). I will briefly discuss the key findings and their theoretical and practical significance in the section below.

My data demonstrate that students who entered universities in Fall 2020 felt most challenged because their first semester was almost entirely online. Studying online and living away from campus was disappointing because they had been anticipating an in-person university life. In the academic year 2020-2021, due to travel restrictions, most students stayed in Asia while experiencing strict local lockdown policies. At the same time, they had to take classes online in the European or North American time zones. As such, first-year international students learning online were more unsatisfied with their university transition experience.

The findings indicated two critical and interconnected theoretical issues in education and student development. One is the multiple transition complications, and another is the space-time displacement. Although the transition theory has been widely applied in college student development, especially among the US veteran, transfer, and community college students, the international and cross-cultural dimensions received less attention (Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Ivins et al., 2017; Tovar & Simon, 2007). Some researchers studied international students' transitions; nonetheless, they focused explicitly on factors relating to English as the second language and cultural unfamiliarity (Heggins & Jackson, 2003; Zhang, 2016).

My research raises the issue concerning "multiple transitions." It refers to the simultaneous and overlapping changes that these first-year university students experienced: (1) transition to university, (2) transition to a foreign education environment, and (3) transition to online learning amid a global pandemic. All were complex processes that entailed challenges and adjustments. As the theoretical transition model predicted, students' relationships, routines,

assumptions, and roles during the transnational university transition all altered to adapt to the new circumstances.

The first two transitions were anticipated changes, so students could use their psychological resources to prepare in advance (Anderson et al., 2011). However, the third transition was an unexpected change precipitated by the pandemic. Due to minimal in-person contact, these students perceived their "moving in" process to be unduly ongoing and prolonged, which exacerbated the transition complications. Being in different physical locations and scenarios influenced these interactions, routines, and responsibilities, as the microsystems students formed and the resources they amassed are significantly influenced by their locations. As a result, relationships were not formed as typical, and routines are predicted to change once they enter university in person. It means they will undergo the "moving in" and "moving through" stages a second time when they attend university in person.

The place and time dislocation or displacement emerged as a critical factor influencing the participants, ultimately revealing the differentiated experiences between 12 hybrid-learning and 18 fully online students. The place-related concept has captured the interests of environmental psychology and mobilities researchers (e.g., Chow and Healey, 2008). Students were attached to their homes and formed new place identities after entering university. This research shows that the ones studying in situ needed to form a new identity and develop social skills in a new cross-cultural environment.

One research on Chinese international graduate students studying at home for a shorter period also identified the distorted time zone issue (Wang, B., 2022). My study echoes the finding that studying abroad at home presents a peculiar condition. Students took classes and socialized in distorted time zones to compensate for place and opportunity losses. However, first-

year college students who are newly entering adulthood require more robust support for their development and psychological well-being (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). As a direct consequence, the individuals who took part in this research encountered a greater degree of cognitive and behavioral challenges and difficulties.

There are more interesting findings from my second round of data collection. The subsequent cohort, those who enrolled in universities afterward in Fall 2021, was more prepared for COVID-19-related online challenges. This finding does corroborate what the transition theory has suggested. One reason is that most people have been vaccinated by the Fall of 2021, and restrictions on campus have been relaxed to allow more student interactions. Further, students have had experiences learning online during high school, so although they did not enjoy online learning, it was a bearable process for them.

> I did my last two years of high school online, so it wasn't hard to manage online for university. But it was definitely sad because I know many of my friends and other countries who didn't need to do anything online. And since we basically missed our entire senior year, because of the pandemic, it felt I was missing more parts of these very crucial points in my life. (Michelle, From India, in Canada)

4.4 Legal Restrictions as "hurdles that I have to jump through"

The fourth intervening condition in the transition model is the legal restrictions or legal limits imposed on international students. Government restrictions on study, internship, and work cause countless difficulties and challenges to students learning and moving in international spaces. Legal restrictions affect international students' decisions on what subject to study and where to work after university. Visa processing issues during the years of the pandemic caused many students to study abroad but at home in different time zones. Even after their arrival, work-visa-related issues led to multiple "hurdles" they had to overcome.

For example, many international students in the U.S. mentioned that they chose to study a "STEM" subject in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The reason is that generally, an eligible international student, after completing the degree in a U.S. institution, may apply for OPT (optional practical training). OPT is one type of work permission that allows students to get real-world work experience related to their field of study for 12 months in the U.S. But students who received STEM degrees may apply for a 24-month extension of their OPT. This extension is crucial to their career development if they want to use the period to intern or work legally to a total authorized working time of 3 years.

Therefore, participants described how they must plan their studies carefully to maximize their future career opportunities. Time and effort spent on researching and adjusting the legal requirements caused much stress for international students. It also meant that students might choose a safe or ideal major rather than a subject they genuinely enjoy learning.

> Working on campus and getting a visa after graduating as a non-US citizen is another hurdle. You have to jump through visa hurdle, and you have to jump through working in the summer for a private company. If I want to continue working in the US or want to go to grad school, working out all those administrative issues with a visa is an annoying thing. Another stress is getting a job, which is tied to the visa because only top companies sponsor the H1B visa. As a non-US citizen, I must mainly focus on applying to more prestigious firms, because they have the capacity to support international workers and international students. My main stresses are related to those things. (Matt)

5. Concluding Remarks

This chapter introduced The Successful International University Transition Model and its four components, which is visually presented in Figure 5-1. The central phenomenon is a successful international transition, with the two tasks of being a university student and becoming an independent adult. The causal conditions leading to a successful transition are academic preparation, family guidance, financial support, and linguistic and cultural familiarity. The four

intervening conditions that may hinder the transition processes are: major and career confusion, campus mismatch, COVID-19-related issues, and legal restrictions. The successful outcome after the transition is the formation of a global citizen habitus.

The model is the result of inductive grounded theory analysis and is abstracted to apply to the researched population. While my sample student population shared many similarities regarding their education paths, they demonstrated heterogeneity and diversity in their experiences. For examples, some students were able to find their passions and ideal career paths before university and some were not. Some were more comfortable with the social-cultural adjustment, while others were not. The next chapter uses a narrative approach to explain the reasons for those differences and students' habitus transformation in new social fields. Lastly, Chapter Seven will address the significance and implications of the transition model and how it relates to literature and existing theory. Recommendations to various stakeholders are provided to show how this model could guide a successful international transition.

Chapter Six: *Habitus* Adaptation in International Fields

Chapter Five presents the Model (Figure 5-1. *The Successful International University Transition Model*), which is the output of using grounded theory approach. The Model captures participants' general and shared experiences and directly anwers to the main research question on the transition process. At the same time, each student embraces unique characteristics, so the relevant conditions in the Model vary accordingly. Students' paths to transformation diverge, despite having many commonalities: high socio-economic background, high linguistic capital, and high levels of cosmopolitanism as cultural capital. *How do students make sense of these transnational experiences? Why and how do students with different compositions of capitals differ?* These are some of the sub-questions I wish to address in this chapter with a theoretically oriented analysis using a narrative approach.

This chapter draws on Bourdieu's conceptual thinking tools of habitus/practice and forms of capital/social fields. As Bourdieu's writing primarily focused on social class, many scholars have argued for expanding habitus to include race, ethnicity, and gender to uncover how these elements are embodied in other research contexts (Raey, 2004). My study on diverse student migrants moving across international contexts offers a good opportunity to examine those elements. When student migrants enter into a new field, they may encounter "*hysteresis*," which occurs as one experiences a mismatch between the existing habitus and the new social field. Such *hysteresis* would lead to a divided habitus, "*habitus clivé*," hence experiencing a "*habitus-field disjuncture* (Friedman, 2016)" I hope to contribute to the discussion by applying Bourdieu's theories to describe how students in international spaces use, accumulate, and are denied capital. More importantly, I suggest ways that young adults could overcome the habitus-field disjuncture and transform in transnational spaces.

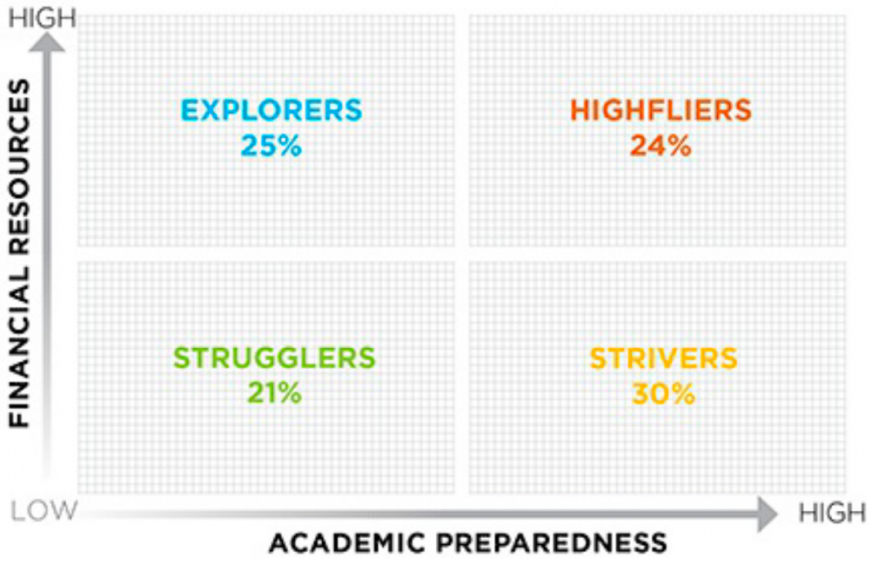
Chapter Six is divided into three main sections. In the first section, I provide a typology to classify students based on their capitals and compare this typology with past scholars' categorizations. In the second section, I demonstrate the role of cultural capitals and the transformation of habitus in international spaces for the three types of students. Instead of detailing the stories of each of the 35 participants, I chose to illustrate the stories of three students as representative cases. Describing individual cases through a narrative approach could improve the readability and provide sufficient context through which we can understand the model. I deliberately omit certain information as a step to protect participant confidentiality. In the third section, I compare the three categories to show the commonality and multiplicity in their transformation.

1. Different Types of Students in International Spaces

Studies on international student mobility have shown that not all international students are the same and suggested different ways of categorization. According to students' financial resources and academic preparedness, a typology of mobile students was developed to identify four categories: strivers, strugglers, explorers, and highflyers (Choudaha et al., 2012; Choudaha & de Wit, 2014). As depicted in Figure 6-1, the first group is the strivers: students who intend to build a career based on their studies abroad. While not always possessing sufficient funding, this does not stop them from pursuing their aspirations (Choudaha et al., 2012). The second group is the strugglers, who usually have limited financial resources and are not top talents, so they are generally less selective about where they would obtain an education. The third group is the explorers, driven not so much by academic interests but by being abroad. The fourth group is the highflyers, who are academically well-prepared and have the means to pursue the best and more

expensive study programs. Unlike strugglers and strivers, explorers and highflyers have more financial resources to afford overseas education.

Figure 6-1. *Segmentation of U.S.-bound International Students*



Source: Choudaha et al., 2012, p.2. Figure 1

Choudaha et al. (2012) also distinguished between global and "glocal" international students: the first group wants to go abroad, and the second is more interested in a foreign degree, preferably taken at home. Highflyers and strivers target high-income countries and top research universities in those countries and middle-income countries. Over the past decades, English-speaking high-income countries have successfully attracted these highflyers and explorers. Without sufficient financial sources, strugglers tend to settle for options in neighboring countries or, like strivers, for a foreign degree taken at home through cross-border delivery.

According to this typology focusing on financial resources and intellectual capacity, we could categorize the participants in this dissertation as *highflyers*. They all study in English-speaking high-income countries (with two exceptions: one in Japan and one in Malaysia, but

both in English-medium institutions). These participants are global international students who wish to obtain undergraduate and advanced degrees.

Another way to understand the highflyers' experiences is through the sociology theories. Ivemark and Ambrose (2021) sought to understand how first-generation students' early socialization and experiences over the life course influence their adjustment to a university. They identified three adjustment profiles for university students in Sweden: adjusters, strangers, and outsiders (Table 6.1. Summary of Key Characteristics of Adjusters, Strangers, and Outsiders). Family resources, early social environment, educational experiences and opportunities, peers, and partners were the five critical factors over the life course to explain the differences in student experiences. Ivemark and Ambrose suggested that "class-related adjustment challenges in college can be traced to different levels of cultural capital acquired during first-generation students' early socialization (2021, p.191)." At the same time, capital acquired through sustained contact with cultural capital—social environments throughout their life course would lead to subtle but consequential habitus adaptations.

Table 6-1. *Summary of Key Characteristics of Adjusters, Strangers, and Outsiders*

Characteristic	Adjusters	Strangers	Outsiders
Sociocultural adjustment	Least difficult	Intermediate	Most difficult
Cultural capital volume	Highest	Intermediate	Lowest
Habitus status	Preadjusted	Cleft	Mismatched
Habitus adaptation	Occurs earlier	Occurs later	None
Family stability	Highest	Intermediate	Lowest
Schooling trajectory	Most successful	Intermediate	Least successful
Representation in degree programs with fewest FGS	Highest	Intermediate	Lowest
Proportion of older students	Lowest	Intermediate	Highest

Note: FGS = first-generation students.

Source: Ivemark & Ambrose, 2021, p.197

Although based on the first-generation student experience in one Swedish university, this typology helps me conceptualize, separate, and sort different components relating to habitus adaptation. Their typology considers the pre-university factors and influences necessary to understand adjustment and transition. Inspired by this method, I charted a table incorporating similar factors with different emphases in Table 6-2. Typology of Habitus *Transformation*. This table exhibits the variations in patterns associated with international transition and transformation.

Table 6-2. *Typology of Habitus Transformation*

Defining Category	**The Cosmopolitan TCK**	**Citizen of Everywhere and Nowhere**	**Privileged International Adjuster**
Example	Roland	Michelle	Sophie
Economic capital	High	High	High
Social capital at destination country	Highest	Lowest	Intermediate
Family cultural capital	Highest	Intermediate	Lowest
Habitus status adaptation	Least difficult	Intermediate	Difficult
Transition adjustment	Least difficult	Intermediate	Some levels of difficulty
Sources of struggle and challenge	Adjusting to independence and being alone in a new environment	From not knowing what to do and finding their places in the world. (Intervening Condition: Major and Career)	Habitus clivé, due to family value differences as they adjusted to independence and developed cognitive complexity. (Causal Condition: Family Guidance)
Similar interviewee participants*	Ashley Camila Jack Megan Nick Serena Greg Patrick Matt Charlie Keith	Sarah Nicole Allen Yazi Lauren Ellen Natalie Penny	Diana Chloe Blaire Tom Kate Ella Iva Cathy Lily Eddie Ana; Joy; Helen

*All participant names have been anonymized

2. Different Types of *Habitus* Transformation in International Spaces

In this section, the differentiated student experiences are illustrated via a narrative approach. According to the typology of habitus transformation, students fall into three categories according to their socio-cultural backgrounds and different levels of cultural capital, social capital, and economic capital at their disposal in their pre-university and university environments. Shown in Table 6.2, there are three defining categories: *The Cosmopolitan TCK*, *Citizen of Everywhere and Nowhere*, and *Privileged International Adjuster* (tentatively named).

It has been consistently pointed out that international school students are competent within multicultural settings and have more significant chances of acquiring cosmopolitanism as cultural capital (Igarashi & Saito, 2014; Wright & Mulvey, 2022). Cosmopolitan exposure, transmitted via family influences and environment, is the key to understanding the varying transition experiences. From the first to the third group, the narratives and analysis will become longer and longer. This difference results from the fact that Cosmopolitan TCK faced minimal challenges, while the Privileged International Adjusters encountered the most complicated set of stresses. The stories and corresponding analysis have different lengths that reflect the nature of the complexity of international transition and adjustment.

2.1 The Cosmopolitan TCK

The Cosmopolitan TCK represents a group of students with similar living and educational trajectory. The Cosmopolitan TCK and their families belong to the categories of "elite cosmopolitans" or "transnational elites" (Igarashi & Saito, 2014). Referring to Chapter Five's Transition Model terms, the Cosmopolitan TCKs are fortunate to have all the causal condition factors conducive to international university transitions. After arriving at the

universities, they faced and overcame the challenges (intervening conditions), adjusted academically and socially, and formed a global citizen habitus.

As individual agents, the Cosmopolitan TCKs inherited economic, cultural, and social capital from their families, which are cosmopolitan and multicultural. Most importantly, the Cosmopolitan TCKs had been pre-conditioned to the social field that largely resembles the international university field. They already developed the early forms of global citizen *habitus* – the socially structured system of dispositions embodied within themselves to organize and generate their perception, judgment, and action. After arriving at the new social environment, their adaptation was relatively easy and quick because they understood the field's rules for academic and career success. In other words, the habitus-disjunction was nearly non-existent in their cases.

Roland's case is an excellent representation of the Cosmopolitan TCK. At the time of the interview, Roland had completed his first year of study at a Canadian university. He was confident and eloquent in sharing his early life and university transition experiences. Roland was born in India and moved to Singapore at eight because of his father's job relocation. He then attended an international school in Singapore designated for students of Indian heritage. With his parents' encouragement, Roland started making airplane models in the 6th grade and decided to become an aerospace engineer in the 8th grade. Since high school, he has participated in various activities and competitions in different countries. Through international travels and communications, Roland formed a practical understanding of what this academic discipline entails, what his peers in this industry are like, and what schools and environments are most suitable. Then under the guidance of a high school counselor, he applied to universities and chose majors that he found most suitable.

According to Roland, he did not perceive any significant challenges during the university transitioning experiences. Some of the obstacles he faced were the life logistics and adjustment issues in moving into a new country: getting bank accounts and new SIM cards. These were the very common tasks mentioned by all interviewees arriving alone in a foreign place.

Even though the university courses were initially somewhat challenging, everything was within his expectation and under control. Since Roland was determined to become an aerospace engineer in his academic and career pursuits, he continued to join various social and professional organizations on and outside the campus. Regarding social adjustment in Canada, Roland did not perceive significant issues and stated that his parents played a role in facilitating his adaptation. His parents both received higher education degrees in India, and his mother received a Ph.D. in English Literature. Roland trusted their suggestions, communicated with his family almost daily, and consulted them when facing social and emotional challenges.

> There were a lot of times when I said, “I met this Canadian dude, and I didn't know what he was saying and things that”. And my father would say “that it's fine, eventually you will have to talk to people.” Also in my university career, when I scored bad in the subject, or I wasn't feeling very confident about myself, or I was feeling lonely and things that, my parents somehow, *they just knew what I was going through*.

As Roland succinctly put it, his parents “just know what I was going through.” “They just know” suggests his parents’ love and care for their child. But more importantly, such knowledge implies a form of cosmopolitan cultural capital to know the Canadian higher education system, academic structure, and socialization rules. With international exposure, they have acquired structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determined ways in the extant environment. Stories like Roland’s were prevalent for other Cosmopolitans TCKs, and students in this group stated how their adjustment was relatively smooth. This is a defining characteristic of

Cosmopolitan families, but not so prevalent among all international *highflyer* groups, which I will demonstrate in the following examples.

2.2 Citizen of Everywhere and Nowhere

The second group of students is the *Citizens of Everywhere and Nowhere*. They have similar economic capital and educational trajectory, as shown in Table 6-2. *Typology of Habitus Transformation*, as the Cosmopolitan TCKs. Students in this group encountered more difficulties in transition and adjustment, especially in figuring out their future paths. Although having linguistic and cultural familiarity, they experienced "*habitus-field disjuncture*" in both their homeland and the new county. Although they have the characteristics associated with being global citizens, they find themselves belonging everywhere yet nowhere. Below I will use the representing account of Michelle to illustrate their experiences.

2.2.(1) "Living in a completely different reality."

Michelle is an Indian female student studying at a world-class university in Canada. She has lived in India, Maldives, and Dubai because of her father's job relocation. She spent most of her childhood in her own country, yet in an environment disconnected from the local society.

She attributed her western upbringing to her parents' influence. They are not the traditional type of Indian: they did not have an arranged marriage or have any particular religion, "which is very odd for an Indian," she commented. Her parents received an Indian education but wanted their children to receive an international education, live abroad, and study abroad to experience different cultures. Michelle and her sister studied in international schools since first grade. At home, her family speaks English and favors English movies, music, and literature.

Although her family enjoys western cultural products, Michelle found her family's values and beliefs not as liberal. She mentioned a few examples to demonstrate the difference: how western values were not accepted in India.

> Things like LGBTQ were still a big problem in India. We had in our school something called a yearly symposium where we would invite LGBTQ figures from lower socio-economic backgrounds. We invited a lot of people from lower CASTE, who are also LGBTQ, and identified within the queer community, to come and talk about their experiences in school. And I was an ambassador for many of those events and helped show them around the school. Those things made a big impact on my understanding.

In addition to value differences between her family and herself, Michelle grew up feeling disconnected from other children receiving a traditional Indian education. The international school has a different calendar and holiday system from the local Indian school, so she did not have the time or opportunity to establish contact with her local peers. Moreover, she does not speak either parent's local language fluently. All these dissimilarities made her feel like she was "living in a completely different reality" while being physically located in India.

2.2.(2) "There is not one community I connect with."

After moving to Canada for university, Michelle encountered few linguistic or cultural shocks because she learned to speak French in high school. Although she knew only a little about the local sports teams or television shows as her local peers do, she did not perceive it to be a problematic life issue. She commented, "I've never felt at home in India or Canada and having culture shock isn't very new for me."

Michelle's feeling of "never felt at home in India or Canada" is another way of describing the *habitus-disjunction*. She explained the feeling of "being an outsider" in more detail by comparing her life as an Indian female in Canada and India. Through living in Canada, she

noticed that being an Indian Canadian versus an Indian student immigrant is very different. In this new context, she now became a "visible minority." Now in a multi-racial country, being a racial minority creates a new identity for Michelle, and she felt "closer to being an Indian than I was when living in India". She explains, "all the characteristics of being an Indian feel much more prominent now."

When discussing future plan, Michelle believed that she would choose Canada or the U.S., rather than returning to India, "I definitely do not see myself living in Asia or India." Michelle noticed many barriers to living in her home country despite being an Indian, such as not speaking any Indian languages fluently, which poses a problem. Michelle reflected: "I have been very sheltered, never had to go out alone. My mom was always worried about my safety. I've not seen a lot of India, and I've not grown up on a lot of Indian television shows or movies and music. I cannot see myself living there."

At the same time, Michelle faced the challenge of finding a local community that she could identify with or belong. While she could befriend with peers easily with no cultural obstacles, she did not seem to share commonality with the international student group or the Indian student group at her university.

> I in fact feel a bit strange interacting with the Indian community, because they are very down to their roots, very Indian, and we don't have a lot of things to talk about in common. I listen to a lot of Korean and Chinese music with my roommate, and we were able to connect on that. Having grown up listening to many Western singers and watching many Western television shows when I was a kid has helped me connect with a lot of local Canadians because we do share some things that way. But there is not one community I connect with.

"There is no one community I connect with" is a thought that seems quite isolating for a young adult, especially studying and living alone in a new environment. When I asked about Michelle's social interactions and the most important relationships in her life, Michelle talked

about her close relationship with her mother and her best friend studying in another country. Despite being very far, they called each other every day to share every little detail in their lives. Michelle believed that common identities bond their friendship together.

> Being an Indian woman is a unique identity. There are only experiences Indian women have in comparison to women in general. My best friend and I have a lot of similar collective identities. That is why we can connect well: we know the experiences of being a non-religious Indian woman living in a predominantly white country.

Michelle was not alone in feeling the *habitus-disjunction*. Her experiences were echoed by a few TCK students who shared similar international and university schooling trajectories. Habitus describes the embodiments of social structures (class, gender, and ethnicity) and history in individuals and a set of dispositions internal to the individual. The habitus of *Citizen of Everywhere and Nowhere* reflects the external social structures which shape how the individual perceives and acts across different contexts. This group of students, while embodying the cosmopolitan characteristics, only partially integrate with their surrounding society during their development process. The class and gender dispositions of this habitus are very durable in influencing these young adults' social preferences and socialization process. At the same time, this bond seems to hinder a smooth transition or integration with the new context in their situations.

2.3 The Privileged International Adjusters

The third category includes the most interviewed participants. Many of them, but not all, attended local international schools, and as such as they represent a growing Asian student population that aims to study abroad. The defining characteristic is that their upbringing is *less cosmopolitan* than the former two groups of students, even though on the surface they may exhibit similar linguistic and economic capital. Although several male students belong to

this group, female Asian students' experiences most exemplify the challenges and difficulties of transnational transitions.

Sophie is one of the most introspective and reflective participants among the interviewees. Her story illustrates how she experienced and overcame the *habitus clivé* to form a global citizen habitus. Sophie participated in two rounds of interviews: in June 2021, after completing her first year of university entirely online, she detailed the frustrating experience. In May 2022, Sophie joined the second round of interviews. She compared the transitions into in-person university and reflected upon her growth over the past year. After arriving on campus, she found meeting the faculty and peers was emotionally joyful and exciting, and in-person academic learning was intellectually stimulating. While she adjusted to the host countries' social fields quickly, she experienced conflicts negotiating the difference in the values at home. As such, the gendered and inter-generational oppression emerged as a defining theme affecting her transformation.

2.3.(1) High SES, High Expectations, High Confusion

Sophie grew up in a family with high socioeconomic status and traditional Chinese values. Born outside of mainland China, Sophie holds a foreign passport and attended an international high school in China that only accepts foreigners. Sophie speaks immaculate American English and received merit scholarship to English Literature at a selective liberal arts college in the U.S. With a high academic caliber, she graduated as high school valedictorian and attained a college GPA of 4.0. Her future goal was to become a scholar and professor of literature. She self-identified as an introverted person and enjoyed expressing herself through English writing in her free time.

Sophie's relationship with her family is complicated and representative of the traditional Asian families. While her father received university education, her mother did not. Both of them do not speak English and know not much about western higher education. On the one hand, her parents fully supported her education and freed her from financial worries. On the other hand, her parents believed that their daughter had everything needed to achieve perfection, and there should be no excuse otherwise. Sophie realized that because her mother did not receive proper education, she wished her daughter to have the best of everything. With this hope, she sent her daughter to the U.S. even if she did not understand that would. Sophie analyzed the thinking behind, "my mother projected so much of what she was deprived of by Chinese society onto me."

> My mom would tell me, "You have everything a girl could ever want. You have a supportive family. You are not ugly. You do well in school. You have a certain kind of social upbringing that makes you able to roam the world however you like and still be accepted in whatever circle you go to. So, you have to be perfect. You have to do good, get good grades, look really pretty, be polite, and very well mannered."

Sophie began to feel lost and did not know who she was apart from the expectations and the ideal her mom set. One of Sophie's main tasks was finding her voice, and she tried to do so by spending a lot of her time in college writing and analyzing her family history and past. It became a learning and healing process for her.

She gradually realized that another source of struggle comes from her family's traditional Chinese values, including "Zhong Nan Qing NV" (value the boy and look down at the girl). Sophie always felt "dumb and inflicted" growing up alongside a male sibling and now understood that this issue resulted from an inter-generational cycle. Sophie's brother studied natural sciences and aspired to be a doctor; Sophie felt inferior in comparison because she majored in the "useless but fun subjects of literature and writing."

> My mom is such a strong patriarchal voice. And it's because of how my grandparents treated her. And that was how it was across generations. I am a product of that. But I want us to reach that place where we can understand and give each other grace. It is important because that is the only way that I will heal. And I hope that she will heal too from what my grandmother did to her. And I think that it is all about changing things intergenerationally and having things stop in the cycle.

After studying in a liberal arts college that emphasizes values such as liberty and equality, Sophie recognized that much of her internal conflicts came from family gender biases of "Zhong Nan Qing NV." Sophie admitted, "I only understand that because I have this education, and not only education in terms of what school can give you, but also an education in terms of what my mentors and teachers have taught me." Sophie understood that her ability to reflect and analyze was part of the evolvement towards developing a habitus that fits the new social field.

2.3.(2) Different Cultural Capitals: "The White parents" vs "My parents"

Now seeing how academically successful Sophie had become in an elite institution, her mother was very proud of Sophie's achievements. However, Sophie described a time when she felt sad after receiving her mother's recognition and compliments.

> My mother was very proud of my college grades, and she says: "if you become a professor one day, I'll go see your lecture and I'll really admire you". I remember thinking that was a beautiful thought. But because of the language barrier and a lot of the ideas that I talked about are so outside of her ontology, she will never understand them. It is too late for her. I remember thinking that my mom will never be able to admire me in my space, which is the academic space is the literature space. She will never be able to see me at my best.

Sophie felt disheartened that her mother would never admire her as her professors or peers do. It was too late for her mother to develop the linguistic and educational ability to "get it all." Still, deep in her heart, she wished to please her mother the most, "*I want my mom to see me in that light, to see me at my best, to see me at my most, to see me in my zone… And that makes*

me sad." This sad and beautiful passage summarizes the sorrow and distress Sophie experienced in her transformation. She wanted to be acknowledged by the person she cared about the most. Yet, she realized the "ontology" gap existed, so her family did not have the capacity to appreciate her in her best form.

In another example, Sophie mentioned her observation during Campus Open Day. "I remember thinking, wow, *white parents* are so engaged and involved in their children's college and learning…well, Chinese parents care too, but my parents only know Harvard, Yale, and Princeton and were not interested in learning more". And when she thought of her work are not recognized by her parents, "I think that's what made it sad for me because it's so easy to see from *white parents* or for other people's parents who get what you do to see you at your best."

Of course, "*white* parents being so engaged and knowledgeable", as Sophie remarked, does not correctly depict the reality of all *white* families. But this comment signals a commonly recognized educational phenomenon. Students from high SES are advantaged in university because they rely on family and friends for college information. Their parents attended college and can share their experiences in university preparation and enrollment with their children. The familiarity with higher education and knowledge of the dominant status hierarchy is an essential and often overlooked form of dominant cultural capital (Evans, 2016; Kleanthous, 2013). Although possessing high SES in the home country, Sophie's family did not have the familiarity and knowledge of the culture of the dominant hierarchy in the host country. As such, she did not have the support she wished for: a family that would understand and support her transition as a student and an adult into a western higher education institution.

2.3.(3) From Habitus Clivé to Habitus Transformation

Sophie's stories and reflections demonstrate a young person's habitus transformation after entering a new social field. Because the family cultural capital does not align with the host society, the young adult experiences *habitus clivé* and *habitus-field disjuncture*. Studying in a highly selective liberal arts college and being exposed to western values let her recognize that the values, logic, rules, and practices differed from what her traditional Chinese family held. To transition successfully, she need to accept and adjust to this new system and overcome the *habitus clivé*.

The gender issue is a prevalent theme facing female international students of Asian heritage. They bear the expectation of being the perfect daughter, but they are inferior to male siblings. Despite economic and social capital privileges, Sophie articulated well how the expectation of being a perfect daughter inflicted great pain and mental stress on her from a young age. She realized that her mother was a strong patriarchal voice and also a victim of the traditional sexist oppressive system. Through entering university in another country alone, Sophie developed as a high-performing university student and an independent adult. She developed the cognitive complexity to realize that the point of doing what she loves is for herself and began the process of transforming her behavior. It is also why Sophie values her university education greatly, "this is the time to think for me for once and not think about how my actions will affect my relationship with my family. I think someday I will have to give up trying to please my mother, and I might as well start doing it now."

> What I really want is for my next generation to not have to go through the same struggles that I went through as a Chinese woman. It is as specific as that I do not want my daughter in the future to doubt herself just because, just because people around her Tell her that, she's dumb because she's a girl, because she's not good at math. Those struggles might not be Chinese struggles, perse, but I just want that intergenerational trauma to stop at some point.

> And to be a more inclusive and better people who can think for us. And I think that is really important. And it starts with educating our girls as much as we educate our boys. And so, my goal is very small, very specific.

The revelation motivated her to become a committed feminist, aiming to break the vicious generational cycle and use her unique writing to tell stories, "I think it also adds a sense of uniqueness to my work, especially in the American or Western canon. I feel I have something to contribute because I've experienced it myself. And I'm not just a secondhand observer; I'm actually a recipient of that."

3. Three Categories in Comparison

As the stories from the Cosmopolitan TCK, Citizen of Everywhere and Nowhere, and Privileged International Adjuster illustrated, despite many similarities, young adults differed in their transnational cultural capitals and identities. On the surface, all students faced similar financial, linguistic, and academic challenges. But they had to deal with different sets of transition challenges.

The Cosmopolitan TCKs encounters developmental challenges of dealing with independence, which all emerging adults commonly experience. Students in this group come from families possessing a *habitus* that aligns well with western university enrollment and success. Their upbringing and family cultural capital allows them to transition well in nearly all situations. Their experiences epitomize the social reproduction theory, which predicts that members of high-status groups would dominate elite social spaces, including top colleges (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Knowledge about choosing well-matched countries, universities, and majors is a form of cultural capital. In the example shown, Roland's "they [my family] just know what I am going through" indicates the cosmopolitan cultural capital that contrasts with Sophie's "they [my family] will never get it [at what I do]."

For Citizens of Everywhere and Nowhere, they tend to grow up in international environments like the Cosmopolitan TCKs. Yet, they face the quandary of finding belongingness and the developmental tasks of finding independence. They often feel "confused" or "uncertain" about what they should do and where they will be in the future. While they see themselves living well in any new environment with few life barriers, they see no place as home.

A few of them mentioned that university is the least diverse or international place they have been, as their university peers are often from local or domestic environments. As such, it is typical for this group of students to foster very strong bonds with few friends from childhood or teenage years because they share the most similar international identities. To a certain extent, this tendency deters them from building new friendships with local peers in the host community. While these students can quickly form the global citizen habitus, we as educators may need to carefully consider how to help them develop social capitals in a new field. It would help them feel more grounded, oriented, and connected in the local community.

I devoted most attention to describing the third type of student, the Privileged International Adjusters, as this group represents Asia's growing upper middle-class student population. I use the term "privileged" to signify their relative financial privilege. Asian families usually place a high value on education and would sponsor their children's university tuition. On the other hand, these young adults' pre-university sociocultural upbringings suggest they must overcome multiple hurdles in reaching a global citizen habitus. *Habitus* is a mediating notion that helps the Privileged International Adjusters revoke the commonsense duality between themselves and the social world.

In transnational transitions, they need to surmount the habitus clivé due to host country values and home value differences, while they adjust to independence and develop cognitive

complexity. The Privileged International Adjusters' transition into university and adulthood occur in an environment with new expectations, rules, languages, and cultures. In this space, their past embodied cultural capital, which comprises the knowledge consciously acquired and passively inherited, is no longer adequate. In anglophone higher education, students need to perceive and analyze their surroundings in ways that synchronize with the host social structure.

The Privileged International Adjusters value their time in university because they start to think for themselves, recognize their strengths, and know more about themselves outside the traditional value canon. This transformation process would lead to the outcome of forming a global citizenship habitus, which aligns well with the values and rules in the new social field. The Privileged International Adjusters internalize the environment and develop lasting dispositions and structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determined ways to thrive in the new social field.

In international education, mobility is considered a way to (re) produce social class advantages and inequality (Tran, 2016). Sophie's case illustrates that she was the product of a privileged education. She could maintain her social class advantage through international education and mobility. At the same time, she formed a new habitus that embodied Western society's values and functions and allowed Sophie to break the constraints of values imposed by her home society. More importantly, she developed the ability and consciousness to contribute to societal change. In Sophie's case, she decided to devote herself to improving gender equality through her writing. As such, I argue that we shall not only see the social reproduction of class and inequality via international mobility. Positive personal transformation and societal contribution are valuable products of international education and mobility.

4. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I applied Bourdieu's sociology theory and used a narrative approach to explain the differences in student experiences. I tried to explore the questions of *How do students make sense of these transnational experiences? Why and how do students with different compositions of capitals differ?* With the conceptual tools of habitus/practice and forms of capital/social fields, this chapter categorizes three student types and shows how seemingly similar students are affected by different capitals. Consequently, students' trajectories and habitus transformation differed as they entered and moved through the international fields.

The next chapter will discuss the significance and implications of the transition model and transnational habitus transformation. I will discuss how these findings relates to existing literature and theory. Furthermore, I will suggest how secondary and post-secondary institutions could utilize this model to facilitate a successful international transition and suggest direction for future research.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Implications

This final chapter provides a synthesis of the dissertation and begins with a summary of the study. To illuminate the meanings of the discoveries, findings are discussed concerning literature from education, sociology, and student development. In addition, this chapter reviews the limitations of the study and suggests future research directions. Finally, it concludes with practical applications and recommendations to various stakeholders who may benefit from reading this dissertation.

1. Summary of the Study

1.1 Purpose

This dissertation is titled: *From international high schools in Asia to world-class Anglophone universities: student preparation, transition, and transformation*. The purpose of this study is to discover, describe, and understand the international university transition experiences of international school alums from Asia. The guiding research question is: *what theory/model explains how students were able (or not able) to experience a successful international university transition?* The main research question was intentionally designed to be broad and general, so I could use a qualitative grounded theory approach to understand participants' experiences holistically and comprehensively.

There are many varied forms of international high schools in Asia, and I chose IBDP graduates as my research participants. IBDP is a clear category of high school graduates of which reliable data exists. This subgroup of Asian international students acts – with recognition of the similarities and differences outlined in chapter 5 – as a proxy population to comprehend the trend and growth of the international secondary school sector in Asia. This group represents the fast-growing students who are learning the international curriculum in order to study abroad.

Through conducting this study, I hoped to identify the factors associated with success and challenges for the international student transition journey.

This dissertation is not standalone research. Rather, a line of related studies conducted during my doctoral training paved the way for this dissertation. In preparation, I completed an edited book and several chapters on international student recruitment and education (de Wit et al., 2022; Wang, 2022; Wen & Wang, 2022; Wen et al., 2022), a mixed-methods pilot project looking specifically at first-year international students' transitions during the pandemic (Wang, 2023), and a comprehensive scoping review on IB's higher education outcomes in non-anglophone countries (Wang et al., under review).

In the scoping literature review, our research team identified that IBDP graduates in anglophone countries and international school graduates from Asia had been studied extensively (Wang et al., under review). However, few studies looked at the experiences of IBDP graduates from Asia who continue their studies internationally. The scoping review pointed out the necessity of studying my research population. I further found that IB graduates encountered complex transitions when they attended universities during the pandemic year, and the time zone distortions and place dislocations negatively impacted their experiences (Wang, 2023). Having completed the scoping review and pilot study, I aimed to both incorporate but also look beyond the pandemic influences. Therefore, I designed a broad research question and included semi-structured interview questions. The questions explored many factors that would play a role in affecting students experiences: family backgrounds, academic and life journeys, changes and development, and identity formation.

This research population is of great interest to me for personal and academic reasons. I previously worked as an international school teacher in China and witnessed how capable and

endowed students experienced international transition challenges. I wanted to understand how educators could facilitate their transnational transitions. In addition, the international school sector is expanding rapidly in emerging economies in Asia, so there are many fascinating educational phenomena to be examined. As an international education researcher, I see an important research gap to fulfill. With better informed knowledge, we can support this growing population and design accommodating programs at the secondary and post-secondary education levels. Lastly, the research population is not confined to the academic environment. With high educational caliber and socioeconomic status, they will become part of the global middle-class and high-skill professional talent foundation, regardless of where they reside after studying abroad. Understanding their growth, transformation, identity development, and life trajectory has significance beyond the academic education field. Therefore, while grounded in the field of international higher education, I sought to incorporate a multi-disciplinary approach and converse with various types of academic literature.

1.2 Research Methods

There are two types of data I utilized in this study. To understand the growth of Asian IB graduates and the trend of their post-secondary study destination, I acquired secondary data from multiple sources, including international student mobility data from the Institute of International Education and confidential secondary data from the International Baccalaureate. The data is used for descriptive analysis in Chapter Four.

The primary data are my individual interviews with participants. Students were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling, with introductions by and recommendations from IB, CIS, and participants. I used a grounded theory approach to collect, analyze, and generate the Successful International University Transition Model in Chapter Five (Figure 2-4). Further, I

attempted to narrate individual student stories and applied Bourdieu's sociological concepts in the theoretical analysis in Chapter Six.

Due to COVID restrictions, all interviews were completed online. Each interview was recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed in MAXQDA. I used sensitizing theoretical concepts from sociology and education to code, organize and analyze interview data. Data are summarized and presented in tables and figures from Chapter Three to Chapter Six.

1.3 Participants Involved in The Study

The Model derives from my primary data: the qualitative interviews with thirty-five current international university students. The research participants all met the inclusion criteria: self-identify as Asian, graduated from an IB high school in Asia, and finished at least one year in an Anglophone institution by the time of the interview. Their involvement in the study consisted of individual online recorded interviews and follow-up member checking.

Among the participants, eight were students that I interviewed in the pilot study in 2021 (details on the pilot study are explained in Chapter Three Section 6). The eight students joined the interviews again in 2022, adding a richer longitudinal perspective to their stories. I asked overlapping semi-structured questions over the two rounds of interviews, which allowed me to compare and corroborate participant stories on the transition process. To some extent, the Model is constructed based on 47 interviews with 37 participants over two years.

1.4 Researcher's Self-Reflection

I started each interview by introducing my background, the rationale for this study, and the research objective. As the sole researcher, I noticed how my identity played a role in participants' responses and my interpretation of the data. Being a more senior Asian female with similar experiences may hold certain authoritative power and turn me into a trusted mentor

figure. Participants often responded with group-inclusion phrases such as “you must know/feel this as well,” “you know because us Asians are collectivists,” and “I am sure you know; I feel we have similar souls.” I sensed that Asian female students tended to connect and confide with me during the interviews. They shared stories that they had not told their parents or friends. This observation may have influenced how I coded and interpreted the data and findings. I documented those moments (primarily the gender and cultural reflections) throughout the analytical memos.

One milestone in this dissertation journey was when I moved to Tokyo, Japan, and enrolled in an immersive language school. I met and interacted with classmates of different ages, backgrounds, and nationalities. Many hoped to begin a new phase of life by attending higher education institutions in Japan after language school. I could not help but constantly compare my classmates with research participants. It became increasingly clear that “international student” is too simple to capture the diversity among young adults moving across borders. Embedding this research in other academic fields, such as sociology and migration studies, broadened my horizon and inspired my interpretation.

2. Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

2.1 Summary of the Key Findings and Themes

Before interpreting the results in connection with existing literature, it is important to summarize the key themes and findings. Firstly, this dissertation finds that for the internationally mobile students, "going to university" involves a complex process where they became independent adults in new social fields. The transitions from adolescence to adulthood and from home environment to a foreign setting presents a student with age-specific and context-specific challenges. One needs to develop the skills to function well both within and outside the university campus. Consequently, analyzing student experiences from a life-span and international perspective is incredibly valuable.

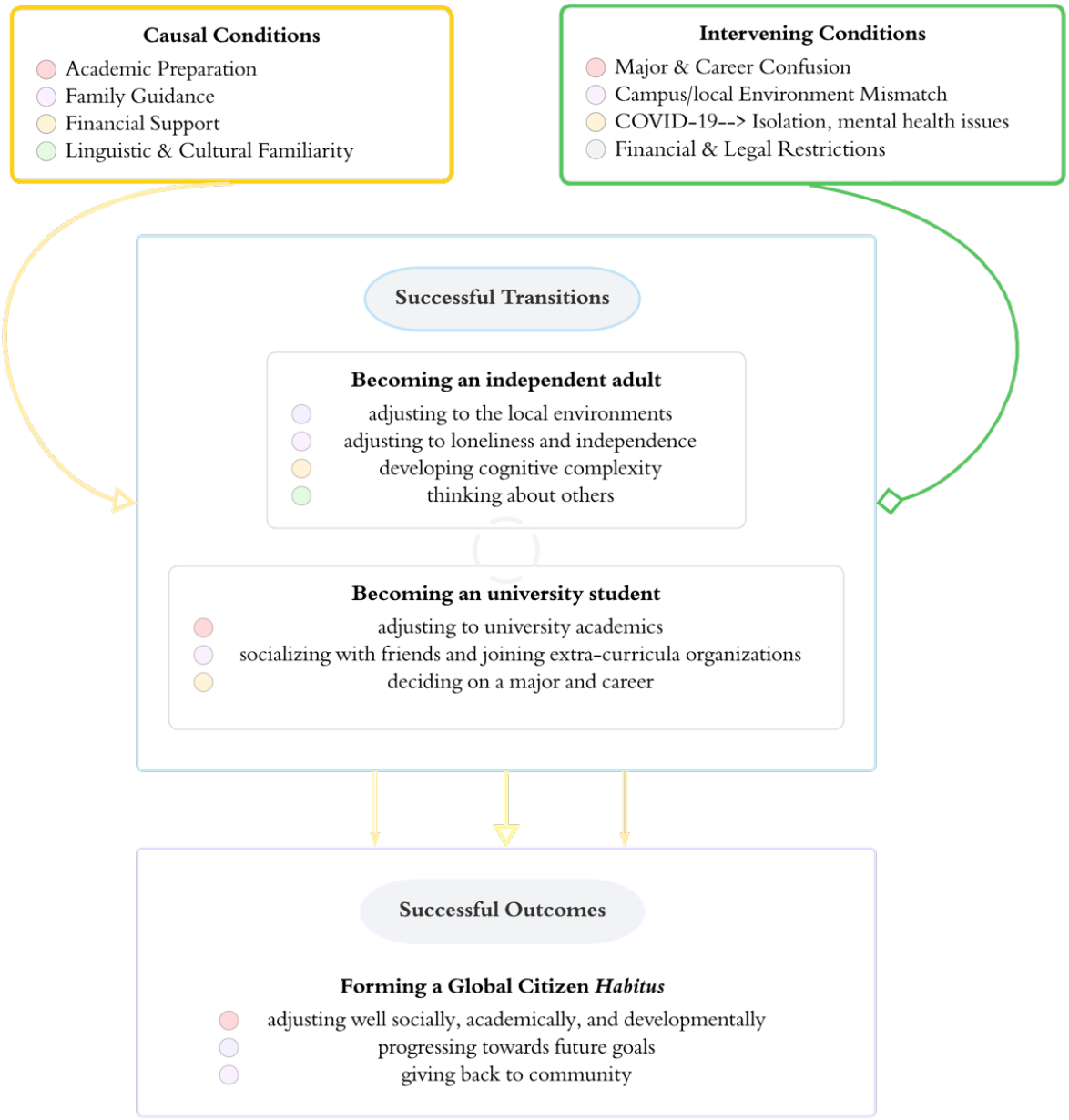
Secondly, in Chapter Five this dissertation introduces "The Successful International University Transition Model" (Figure 5-1) and explains the facilitating and preventing factors. This Model includes four elements: causal conditions, intervening conditions, the central phenomenon, and ideal outcomes for successful transitions. Many conditions are supported by current theories, but this model places an emphasis on student's holistic development and looks beyond degree attention and completion. We may use this model as an example to assist other international student population in their transition journey.

Thirdly, Chapter Six highlighted the heterogeneity in student experiences, which vary according to differences in demographic, gender, ethnicity, family upbringing, and high school context. To illustrate how variances in sociocultural backgrounds result in differences in transformation, I used the typology and narratives of Cosmopolitan TCK, the Citizen of Nowhere and Everywhere, and the Privileged International Adjuster. Classifying all international

students into one category with the same assumptions will not be useful to interpret and facilitate their transitions.

2.2 The Successful International Transition Model

2.2.(1) The Model and the Four Components



In *The Successful International University Transition Model*, the four causal factors leading to a successful transition are: academic preparation, family guidance, financial support,

and linguistic and cultural familiarity. Meanwhile, challenges, including major/career confusion, campus/local environment mismatch, isolation and loneliness issues (predominantly caused by COVID-19 in this study), and legal/VISA restrictions are conditions intervening with students' international transition.

Further, I identified two related themes associated with the central phenomenon of international transitions: being a university student and becoming an independent adult. Each theme bears a set of tasks one needs to reconcile or overcome. After entering higher education institutions, students must meet the university-level academic requirements, socialize with peers, and decide on their majors. In addition to the academic setting, these internationally mobile students are alone in a foreign environment. They face the tasks of adjusting to the local environment, adjusting to loneliness, developing a more complex and mature mindset, and thinking about others. The difficulty and length of this process depend on the previously mentioned causal and intervening conditions.

Ultimately, the successful transition will lead to an ideal outcome as students form a *global citizen habitus*, a mediating notion between the individual and their social worlds. *Global citizen habitus* implies that one has gained global competencies and consciousness and transformed the patterns of thoughts, tastes, preferences, and dispositions. After a successful international transition, one can adjust well socially, academically, and developmentally. Despite the challenges and confusion, these internationally mobile students would progress toward their future academic and professional goals. They evaluate their abilities and seek ways to contribute to their community and society.

The Successful International University Transition Model is similar to other higher education success models cited in Chapter Two. For example, some popularly applied models include *The Conceptual Model of Student Success* (Perna & Thomas, 2008) and *The Cultural Engaging Campus Environment Model* (Museus, 2014). Museus (2014) focused on creating the conditions for college success, persistence, and degree completion. Perna and Thomas (2008) explained the student success model through ten indicators in four categories:

- college readiness (educational aspirations and academic preparation)
- college enrollment (college access and college choice)
- college achievement (academic performance, transfer, and persistence to completion)
- post-college attainment (post-BA enrollment, income, and education attainment)

Our models consider factors contributing to student academic success in higher education. These factors regard the individual (dispositions and goals), pre-college inputs (family, school, and academic preparation), and university/institutional environments and contexts. In addition, our models include the conditions that describe the critical challenges commonly confronting college students. The Conceptual Model of Student Success (Perna & Thomas, 2008) and my model share similarities with the human ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1993), as they explain the multiple layers of influence on the individual learning and outcome.

At the same time, the proposed Model in this dissertation differs from other models. Firstly, The Successful International University Transition Model" (Figure 2-4) defines success differently. Models in the prior literature assess "student success" using indicators of college enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment. While these are important indicators, we may overlook international student transition complications using only these indicators.

The proposed Model moves beyond the success definition and focuses on the central phenomenon of student transition into and development on campus and in the local context. After social and academic adjustment, the outcomes of a successful transition include progress toward future goals and giving back to society. Success for internationally mobile young adults is to form a global citizen *habitus.* For internationally mobile students, especially the high-performing participants in this research, achieving academic success is imperative in the international education journey. But the off-campus factors play a more prominent role in influencing their experiences and learning. As such, the proposed Model contained more components than academic success.

Secondly, Secondly, while the CECE model (Museus, 2014) also highlights the significance of culture for the racially diverse US college student and the external financial influences, *The Successful International University Transition Model* finds and adds additional causal and intervening conditions unique to the case of the international students. For example, creating a culturally and racially inclusive college campus environment is essential to support students holistically. Perhaps more importantly, the knowledge and sensitivity of the host country's linguistic, cultural, political, economic, and racial climates are even more critical to the international student population. Further, the financial and legal requirements, such as work and internship restrictions and student loan exclusions, are not considered in the general models for the domestic college student population. However, these impeding conditions have imposed multiple limitations on international students' transitions and affected their academic, career, and life decisions.

Thirdly, the Model differs from, although influenced by, Schlossberg's Adult Transition Model (Anderson et al., 2011; Goodman et al., 2006). The Adult Transition Model aims to help

individuals cope with transitions and is situated at the individual level to guide the counselor-individual sessions. My proposed Model, on the other hand, focuses on the specific scenario of international university student transition and includes multiple layers of assistance and support to improve their experiences. Further, my research population is the emerging adults. They encounter different developmental challenges than mature adults. Therefore, finding independence and developing cognitive complexity are critical tasks in the central phenomena in the proposed Model.

2.2.(3) The Model's Other Applications

The Successful International University Transition Model may be applied to other types of students experiencing international transitions, although it is developed from data on Asian international IBDP alums now studying in Anglophone universities. The Model needs to be modified according to specific populations and contexts. For instance, as the factors in causal conditions predict, non-IBDP students would encounter academic preparation challenges, which could present a problem in transition. The causal conditions further point out the significance of linguistic and cultural familiarity, so the transition challenges may be more severe for international students who are not as familiar with the instruction language and culture.

The Model could also be applied to local domestic students. It could be the case that domestic students face fewer obstacles in the causal condition of linguistic familiarity or intervening condition of work/visa restrictions. But as the higher education literature has identified, domestic students are increasingly diverse. Many underprivileged students entering higher education, such as first-generation, minority, or working-class students, likewise encounter barriers in terms of cultural familiarity with the college environment (Museus, 2014).

They would need college guidance and financial support according to their conditions. In short, The Model is theorized to be general and modifiable to suit individual cases.

2.3 International Habitus Transformation

After introducing the general Model in Chapter 5 with a grounded theory approach, Chapter 6 discusses the heterogeneity in student experiences and transformation using a narrative approach. I attempted to interpret the important causal conditions in the Model with Bourdieu's conceptual tools: habitus/practice and forms of capital/social fields. I found that family cultural capital (often hidden and not easily measured), gender, and cultural expectations were crucial in influencing Asian students' journeys and experiences. Although these students may seem to embrace similarly high academic caliber (intellectual capital), high socioeconomic background (economic capital), and fluent English levels (linguistic capital), their international transition experiences, central tasks, and habitus transformation varied.

2.3.(1) Academic Preparation at the Secondary Stage

This dissertation finds IBDP education to be an ideal academic preparatory program for continuing post-secondary education, especially for Asian students transitioning into higher education in anglophone contexts and institutions. This secondary program familiarized students with westernized higher education's academic rules and expectations. Students mentioned high-stress levels when transitioning into the IBDP programs but ultimately found themselves well-prepared for academic challenges. Participants reported being comfortable with public speaking, essay writing, time management, and critical thinking after entering university. These are valuable skills and traits contributing to academic persistence and success at anglophone higher education institutions.

My findings on this population confirm what previous literature suggested regarding IB alums' university experiences. Non-Asian IBDP Students reported being well-prepared for college in terms of entrance, retention, and completion (Coates et al., 2007; Culross & Tarver, 2011; Hertberg-Davis & Callahan, 2008; Perna et al., 2015; Saavedra, 2014; Suldo et al., 2018). In these studies, most IB high schools are located within anglophone countries (the UK, the US, Canada, and Australia). This fact is understandable because those countries have the most IB schools and IBDP graduates. Non-Asian IBDP graduates from those schools tended to continue higher education in their own countries. In short, our studies all find that students experienced high pressure and stress associated with learning the rigorous IBDP curriculum.

2.3.(2) Cultural Capital and Economic Capital

The findings on student academic success are consistent with what educational sociologists and psychologists have found about the academic success of middle class (and above) students. Social class, social connections, cultural capital, and economic capital associated with high SES status (middle- and upper-middle-class) contribute to student academic success (Jack, 2016; Lareau, 2011). The research participants attended international high schools and universities not only because their high SES families have the financial resources. Their families hold high expectation for their children's development and believe that western international education would lead to more opportunities in the future. Such expectation itself is an important form of cultural capital.

Some participants illustrated the myriad ways through which they succeeded in the IBDP program and enrolled in world-class universities. They benefited from expensive international schooling, private after-school tutorials, college counselor guidance, campus visit exposure, and family social connections. Those various forms of economic, social, and cultural capital together

lead to university entrance, persistence, retention, and success. Consequently, although being international students and "visible minority" in a foreign context, students in this research did not encounter significant academic challenges even in competitive world-class universities.

2.3.(3) Looking Beyond the Social Class Analysis

Because of the significance of family SES, scholars primarily, if not only, differentiate student groups by social class. However, distinguishing students by economic status is inadequate in explaining how students of the same class differ. Examining international student experiences using economic and social class analysis is valuable yet inadequate.

There is an emerging but limited literature from the ethnic and migration field that investigates the transnational habitus shifts as students move across borders. My research inevitably taps into another academic field: education and migration. My participants are, in effect, international student migrants, whether intending to stay in the host country or return to their home country. In international or transnational spaces, student migrants face the tasks of becoming adults and adapting to the social structures of the host country.

Bourdieu suggested that "hysteresis" would occur as experiencing a mismatch between the existing habitus and the new social field. This mismatch creates a divided habitus, or "habitus clivé." Research in sociology and migration has utilized the concept "habitus-field disjuncture" to analyze migrants' life as they move into a new social field. Theses scholars have repeatedly pointed out that transnational habitus is under-recognized, under-researched, and under-theorized in education and migration studies (Mulvey, 2020; Soong et al., 2018; Xu, 2017).

My study shows that internationally mobile students or student migrants also experienced a habitus clivé: university in another country. To some extent, it can be said that they simultaneously experienced two habitus clivés in two social fields: moving from high school to

university and moving from their home country to the host country. These students experienced varied habitus transformation and adaptation levels, and I created a typology to distinguish three types of students by their family and cosmopolitan cultural capital. Students in the Cosmopolitan TCK group had original social dispositions that aligned quite well with the host sociocultural environment (university and local community). On the other hand, many participants' dispositions did not align well with the host environment and encountered a more considerable mismatch or "habitus clivé."

2.3.(4) Changing Transnational Habitus

This dissertation then analyzed how the participants experienced "habitus clivé" and changed their habitus. These participants are exceptional cases because they have the intellectual and linguistic capital and a rich vocabulary to vocalize their observations, thoughts, and developments. With a high level of agency, they recognized the changed social positions and acted upon the surroundings with available resources – a proactive help-seeking behavior often associated with middle-class upbringing (Lareau, 2011). They were able to move across the disjuncture after experiencing various "habitus clivé."

Due to their middle-class and upper-middle-class upbringing, many international students differ from the "first-generation US college students" or "working-class students." At the same time, these students share similarities regarding resource and knowledge deficits in the western higher education. Rich literature has documented the differences between middle-class and working-class students' capital and habitus, especially accounting for the family influences. Very crucially, familial habitus is the complicated compilation of values, attitudes, and knowledge base that the families possess in relation to the field of education, and "it is profoundly influenced by the educational experiences of parents (Reay, 2010, p. p. 77)".

For students within the Privileged International Adjuster group, this is often the first time anyone in their family has received higher education, let alone an education abroad. Besides their classmates or high school alums, no one in their close circle experienced a similar transition, so they could not turn to family or relatives for guidance.

As previously stated, the habitus clivé is frequently caused by differences between the home and host environments. For instance, female students who come from traditional Asian homes must find a method to break free from the restrictions, such as gendered oppression, that are present in their home environment. They need to revisit their histories, write their own stories, and establish new plans for their futures in the context of the current environment. In addition to the skills they receive in higher education and the liberal environment they are exposed to, they actively pursue resources and guidance. These students progressively developed new expectations and goals for themselves that were in harmony with the social laws and structures that governed these new social fields.

Furthermore, this transformation demonstrates an aspect of human agency in contrast to structural determinism. We have the capability to engage in socio-analysis as human beings, which is the ability to reflect on what has made us who we are and be reflexive about our habitus (Rawolle & Lingard, 2019). This finding corroborates with other researchers studying international education and student mobility. For instance, Marginson (2014) proposed the notion of "self-formation." Through international education, international students became self-forming agents to pursue the course of life. Building on this concept, Tran (2015) and Tran et al. (2018) suggested that international students' spatial movement is a way to produce new conditions and possibilities for self-transformation and identity reconstruction. The spatial movement provided a condition for international students develop a self-forming agency.

3. Limitations of The Study

There are a few limitations in this dissertation. In using purposeful sampling, I recruited participants with specific characteristics. The selection of participants was based on the judgment and inclusion criteria determined by the researcher, which raises issues regarding researcher bias. Another limitation is that the participants in this study are almost all "highflyers." It might be because the students who were more satisfied with their IBDP and university education chose to respond to the call for participants. As such, the participants became a self-selected group. Another limitation is that I could not recruit participants from Japan and South Korea, despite recommendations and letters written to different schools over three months. I plan to reach out again after completing the dissertation to test the generalization of The Model.

The second limitation regards the form and method of data collection. This dissertation took place during the pandemic, and I would have preferred to have the opportunity to visit the participant in person or conduct observations on-site. When I started the participant interview in April 2022, many Asia countries and regions were still under COVID control. I was confined in a strict zero-COVID quarantine zone in Beijing, and some students participated in interviews in their quarantine hotels. Consequently, all the interviews were conducted via Zoom.

The third limitation, commonly associated with conducting a qualitative study, is that the sample size is small compared to a quantitative study. However, generalization is not a goal in this qualitative research, and the grounded theory analysis has reached saturation with the theoretical categories.

Overall, I was satisfied with the participant interviews for two reasons. Because of their linguistic capital, they had the capacity to verbalize their experiences eloquently. Because of their international backgrounds and multicultural knowledge, they articulated the cultural and

generational differences effectively. These two advantages led to rich, high-quality, and satisfying data that greatly strengthened the study.

4. Directions for Further Study

4.1 Research focus: The value of studying international IB programs and the population in Asia

IB, as a comprehensive educational system, with a curriculum different from the ones offered in many national schools, has become a phenomenon deserving special attention from educational researchers and practitioners. The descriptive data from IB displays that IBDP's development is robust in the Asian Pacific Region. Over the past ten years, the number of Asian IBDP graduates has increased by 100 to 200 percent. Further, Asian IBDP graduates plan to pursue post-secondary education in Anglophone countries and contexts. The top four English-speaking countries' dominating role in the international student market is similarly reflected in the IBDP graduate' preferences. Other Asian destinations, including India (4,946), Hong Kong (3,500), and Singapore (7,446), with many EMI higher education institutions, also experience a rapid increase in the number of transcripts received from Asian applicants.

These statistics highlight the importance of researching the IB program and its students in Asia. Through them, we could comprehend the trends and dynamics of international secondary education. It is not surprising that international schools, local private schools, and, increasingly, national public schools welcome the integration of IB programs in their systems. There is great merit in conducting additional empirical research on the growing Asian IBDP population, their secondary school learning experiences, and their higher education outcomes either domestic or foreign institutions. The Model proposed in this study could be tested on other populations undergoing international transitions in future research.

In addition, future research using comparative, evaluative, and quantitative methods will be beneficial and informative. For example, researchers could compare students within and across groups with similar characteristics using cohort studies. The student group selected for comparison should be as similar as possible in all characteristics except the IBDP education differences. Future researchers should also strive to evaluate IBDP students against students in other curricula with similar demographic, family, and academic backgrounds to generate scientific inferences.

4.2 Theoretical focus

Habitus clivé is a complex theoretical construct that encompasses deeper meanings than the concept *mindset difference*. How do people, then, actually experience and overcome habitus clivé? The process of habitus change is not explicitly explained in this dissertation, or in the other sociological studies cited. This collection of sociology theories and related processes seem to exist in a black box and require careful unpacking. I recommend using the grounded theory method in future studies to create a model that specifies this process. In that way, we could more clearly define and explain the causal and intervening conditions, themes, and categories associated with these theories.

Lastly, the findings in this dissertation lead to a few follow-up research questions that I aim to explore in the future:

1. How do the experiences of Asian male and female international students differ based on gender expectations, racial and ethnic roles, and power relations?
2. TCKs appear to experience very few transitional challenges, yet they struggle with identity uncertainty and become *apolitical*. Many of them fall into the group of Citizens

of Everywhere and Nowhere. How does teaching about global citizenship consider the needs of this special group?

3. Students' experiences and growth at university are substantially influenced by their social networks. People tend to form friendships based on their educational and cultural backgrounds. How does this socialization affect their professional and life trajectory after university?

5. Applications and Recommendations

The following section addresses the implications and application of the findings based on the Model. Different population and stakeholders may benefit from reading this study. Some of the suggestions are generated from the question I asked participants: *what advice would you give to institutions that would have facilitated your international transitions better?* Therefore, as with the rest of this dissertation, the applications are derived from participants' lived experiences as well as my interpretation.

5.1 International Secondary Schools

Academic preparation. The findings from this research offer transferrable lessons for non-IB secondary schools that wish to recruit and prepare students who aspire to attend anglophone higher education. In The Model, academic preparation is one of the most important causal conditions contributing to students' successful transition to university. The finding shows the success of international IBDP in preparing Asian students for world-class higher education. In addition to curriculum content, academic skills such as public speaking, essay writing, time management, and critical thinking are highly valued at anglophone higher education institutions. Providing assignments and opportunities for high school students to practice and enhance these

abilities will be valuable. These skillsets will facilitate students' academic transitions and success in western higher education institutions.

University, major, and career guidance. In addition to academic knowledge and skills, secondary schools could strive to provide as much information as possible on different types of universities, majors, and careers. The confusion on future paths and the mismatch in the campus environment are two intervening conditions identified in the Model. Some participants stated that their high schools had done an excellent job of equipping knowledgeable guidance counselors. These guidance counselors assisted them in understanding and navigating their professional options and educational destinations. High school could prepare students to know that similar support services exist in university and encourage students to look for services in college. Encouraging proactive behaviors such as information-gathering and help-seeking will enhance transition success.

Diverse teachers and staff hiring and training. Cultural and linguistic familiarity was another causal condition for a successful transition. Some parents have not studied or lived in the host countries, so they cannot share knowledge and guidance with their children. Therefore, equipping the school with culturally knowledgeable teachers is beneficial so students can turn to schoolteachers and staff for information and mentorship. Some students mentioned the frustration when seeking guidance, as one mentioned, "white teachers do not get our cultural nuances." It would be valuable to hire a diverse team of teachers and staff, such as those who have studied abroad or those who share similar demographics as students. In addition, providing teachers and staff with regular training on culturally, racially, and ethically sensitive and knowledgeable topics will allow them to deliver better and more compassionate guidance to students.

5.2 Higher Education Administration

Academic and career advising. One of the intervening conditions is students' confusion when choosing a suitable major and career. Many students did not enter college with well-defined career and life goals. In the British system, students must decide on a major before university entrance. In the U.S., university students need to decide on a major in their second academic year. Despite differences in university systems governing students' disciplinary decisions, career guidance would greatly benefit international students unfamiliar with the host countries' employment market and norms. Student career services related to their chosen major would be beneficial, including interests-matched major advice, personality-matched career advice, alum talks, and recruitment fairs.

Mentors of similar race, gender, and ethnicity. As Chapter 6 illustrated, students without parental guidance actively sought mentors on campus and desired to be role models for others with similar backgrounds. It would be beneficial for students to encounter a diverse range of faculty members and international alums. Visibility could be created through campus publicity and exhibitions showcasing their work and personal stories. Further connections could be established through offering workshops, campus talks, or internships. As such, Asian international students could expand their imaginations on the things they could achieve even as minority students from another country.

Affinity groups and cultural centers. International student organizations, cultural clubs, and religious groups could foster cultural validation in underrepresented groups on campus. For international students, this type of group frequently serves as a jumping off point for interacting with other students on campus. Students acquire social capital and expand their social networks with people they share similarities and can quickly connect. Further, through these opportunities,

students acquire leadership roles and learn to serve as role models for others within the institutional community. Validating international students' cultural capital and encouraging their social capital expansion could effectively contribute to transition success.

Connect students with the local community. As the findings emphasize, students are not only university students but also members of the local community they now live in. The students are also cultural resources that could play a part in the cross-cultural development for people on and beyond campus. University leaders and student affairs professionals could seek ways to connect international students with the community and create a community web to facilitate interaction and communication.

5.3 International Education Organizations and Education Ministries

Information sharing. One of the characteristics of international IB schools in Asia is their small student enrollment number. This condition is similar for international private and public high schools using other curricula, such as the Cambridge A-Level or American Advanced Placement. As a result, these secondary schools have a relatively small alum network to share information with. This dissertation exemplifies how international education organizations, including The Council of International Schools and International Baccalaureate, play a significant role in bridging secondary institutions with university recruiters and administrators.

In the case of IB, the official organization has access to an extensive international IB alum network. Many interview participants valued their identity aligning with the IB learner profile and as part of a global community. Similarly, non-IB international schools and their alumni can form a community through international organizations. These channels offer a wealth of chances for disseminating information about university access, admission, choices, persistence, and achievement.

Educational data collection and analysis. The relatively small size of international schools and the IB population means that it is difficult to conduct large-scale quantitative studies, which led to some educational research concerns regarding research methods and analysis. Although there are many qualitative studies on this educational topic, only few quantitative studies that applied rigorous methods exist (e.g., Dickinson et al., 2018; Jaafar et al., 2021). In the scoping review article, we suggest that it would benefit international organizations to gather and share rich student examination data because demand for international secondary education continues to increase (Wang et al., under review).

Further, the reverberating worries about elitism and inequality imply that IB and national ministries should broaden IB to reach a more diversified student population. A rigorous and high-quality international education could be very beneficial for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Lastly, national education ministries and agencies should fund longitudinal research to investigate international education's longer-term effects. As IB proved to be a high-quality education program, many public schools have begun adopting the IB curriculum into their systems. It also implies that a comparative method to examine the educational outcomes across nations will be highly valuable. Nevertheless, it calls for collaborative efforts by international organizations and education ministries. As a result, research on the international secondary to higher education pathway can be of higher quality and significance to impact policy and practice, especially in less researched contexts.

6. Conclusion

In summary, this dissertation uses a grounded theory approach to analyze students' transition from international IB high schools in Asia to world-class universities in anglophone

contexts. The objective is to identify and understand the factors contributing to and prohibiting young adults' successful transitions in transnational contexts. For two reasons, this study purposively chose current university students who have graduated from Asian IB programs. One, they represent the international student population growing rapidly in Asia. Two, as a result of their EMI education, they were able to clearly articulate their experiences and identify barriers beyond the commonly stated linguistic issue.

Through in-depth interviews with thirty-five participants, this study constructed a model of Successful International University Transitions and explained the conditions and outcomes for a successful transition. To further explain the diversity of student experiences in transnational spaces, I drew on sociological theories of fields, habitus, and capitals in addition to the general Model. These young adults grappled with new conditions and positions in different social fields. They must adapt to solitude, develop cognitive complexity, overcome oppressions, surmount habitus clivé, and form a global citizen habitus. The international transition process, in essence, is a journey of *transforming* and *becoming* in international spaces. It entails the tasks of becoming a university student and an independent adult in a fast-changing world.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyers

Flyer 1. Green Theme

Flyer 2. Pink Theme

Appendix B: Recruitment Email

Dear (Student Name),

As (The Recommender) mentioned, my name is Jo and I am conducting research to explore students' experiences of attending universities/colleges in an English-speaking country. Your background of receiving an IB education in an international school in Asia makes you stand out from the general international student population pool. I hope to understand how your past education shape your university/college experiences and how you would differ from and or share similarities with the other students.

You will receive a $15 USD e-Gift Card for a 45-to-60-minute individual Zoom interview. Your insights will allow international educators and researchers to gain more knowledge to provide better student support.

If you wish to share your thoughts, questions, insights, and reflections, please refer to this link to schedule a meeting at a time that is convenient for you. If you prefer to look at the questions and prepare in advance, here is a list of questions I intend to discuss in our conversation. We may or may not cover all of them.

Feel free to contact me with any questions at any time. I truly look forward to meeting you virtually!

Best regards,

Jo Wang

Ph.D. Candidate, Boston College

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Invitation to be part of a research study

You are invited to participate in an interview that will be evaluated for a doctoral dissertation research project that seeks to understand the transnational university transition experiences.

This qualitative dissertation aims to explore the transnational transition experiences of Asian IBDP alum who choose to study abroad for higher education. This research seeks to understand the process of young adults entering a new social, cultural, and political educational setting and then adjusting and developing in such an environment.

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to learn about the transitioning experience from the perspective of students who are IB alum from Asia.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed by "Jo" Lizhou Wang, the principal investigator of this research project.

The interview will be held via Zoom and take 45 to 60 minutes. In this interview, you will be asked questions related to your experience of attending university.

The interview will be recorded for transcription, and after transcription, the recording will be deleted promptly. The transcript will include your responses to demographic questions concerning age, gender, and ethnicity, but it will not contain your name or any other direct identifier.

Financial Compensation

You will receive a $15 Amazon e-Gift card sent to your email after participating in the interview.

How could you benefit from this study?

The reflection of one's experience is a form of sense-making and will directly benefit one's psychological growth.

The result of this study will also contribute to higher education's institutional practices on how to provide assistance to international school graduates. Further, it will deepen K-12 international schools' understanding of how to better prepare students for college.

Cost

There is no cost to you to participate in this interview.

What risks might result from being in this study?

There is no perceived risk associated with this study.

How will we protect your information?

Your identifiable information (name and email) will only be on this consent form. Each participant will be assigned with a unique coded identifier to replace the actual identifiers. A record that links each participant’s coded identifier to his or her actual name will be maintained separately and will not include research data.

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that may publish, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify you.

All electronic information (video and audio files) will be coded and secured using a password-protected folder and be stored on Boston College secure server. Only the researcher directly involved in the study (Jo Wang) will have access to the research folder.

The Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records. State or federal laws or court orders may also require that information from your research study records be released. Otherwise, the researchers will not release to others any information that identifies you unless you give your permission, or unless we are legally required to do so.

Your participation in this study is voluntary

Participating in this interview is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the interview now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. If you discontinue participation, it will not affect your current or future relations with the university, the school or with the researcher involved in the project.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this research, you may contact

Researcher: Lizhou "Jo" Wang (wangliz@bc.edu)

Advisors: Gerardo Blanco (blancoge@bc.edu) and Hans de Wit (johannes.dewit@bc.edu)

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researchers, please contact:

Boston College, Office for Research Protections

Phone: (617) 552-4778

Email: irb@bc.edu

The Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records. State or federal laws or court orders may also require that information from your research study records be released. Otherwise, the researchers will not release to others any information that identifies you unless you give your permission, or unless we are legally required to do so.

Your consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to participate in this interview. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You can save a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

By signing below, you acknowledge:

Your participation in the study is voluntary.

You are 18 years of age.

You are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation at any time for any reason.

Please Type Your Name:

Please Enter Today's Date:

Then Submit Electronically via Qualtrics.

Appendix D: Interview Protocols

Semi-Structured Interview Question List

On Transition

1. What was your high school experiences like? Prompt: environment, the DP curriculum, teacher-student relationships.
2. How was your transition into university? What were your feelings and thoughts when you arrived on campus?
3. What changes, if any, have occurred in your life since you began your university?
4. What are your thoughts and feelings regarding your university experience?
5. As you look back, are there any events that stand out in your mind?
6. What problems or stresses have you encountered, if any?
7. What helped you to manage the challenges and stresses?
8. Who has been the most helpful to you during this time? How has he/she been helpful?
9. Has any organization been helpful? What did this organization help you with? How has it been helpful?
10. Have your views on studying abroad changed since you started college? If so, in what ways?

Development

1. How would you describe the person you are now? What contributed to this change or continuity?
2. Where do you see yourself in five years? Describe the person you hope to be then. How would you compare the person you hope to be and the person you see yourself as now?

3. How have you grown as a person since starting university? Tell me about the strengths that you discovered or developed through these years. What do you most value about yourself now? What do others most value in you?
4. Do you experience identity confusion in university? Why? How?
5. What do you think defines you? Why?

Individual or personal identities:

- What are your goals, values, beliefs, and other individually held self-evaluations and expected future selves? Has this view changed since you started university? In What ways? How did the change occur?

Relational identities:

- What do you view as your roles in relationships with others? What are the most important relationships in your life? Why? How did you establish and maintain these relationships?

Collective identities:

- What social categories do you think you belong to? Prompt: as ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and nationalities.
- What is your feeling when you identify with them? Have your beliefs and attitudes changed since you started university? In What ways? How did the change occur?

Material identities:

- What social entities or material goods do you think are vital to you? E.g. geographic places or material artifacts such as cars, houses, clothes, and even bank accounts.