

EXPERIENCES OF THE GIFT, PERCEPTIONS OF THE COMMODITY:  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE AFFECTS OF COMMODITIZATION ON  
EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION  
PROGRAM

by

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at

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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## **Abstract**

International education is a profitable industry in Canada with thousands of students entering the country each year to contribute millions of dollars to educational institutions in the form of tuition payments. Students around the world are encouraged to seek out international experiences in order to build a cosmopolitan knowledge that will be an asset for employment in the global economy. As a result, academic credentials acquired through international education programs have become a valuable object for international students. This research project examines the experiences of students, and faculty, with international education to explore how participants view the nature of their educational relationships. Given current critiques about commodification and the entrepreneurial activities by education institutions in the international market, this project highlights ways in which economic relationships between institutions and students/clients affect the gift-giving exchange that is the basis for non-economic educational relationships between faculty and students.

## **List of Abbreviations Used**

CHST	Canadian Health and Social Transfer
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
UAE	United Arab Emirates
US	United States

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### *Introduction*

There is a long history of travel associated with education. The practices of moving between borders for education are not really a new phenomenon. For many centuries scholars and students have traveled in search of prospective educational opportunities.<sup>1</sup> However, the contemporary form of international education is dominated by a flow of non-western students moving to western countries (McMahon, 1992). This is a significant trend as the number of students who choose to study in another country increased over the past three decades. Approximately 800,000 students studied in host countries in 1975. This number increased to 3.3 million by 2009 (OECD, 2010a, p. 334). As this trend further develops estimates place the number of international students at 7.2 million by the year 2025 (Bohm, Davies, Meares, & Pearce, 2002, p. 3). If these trends continue to develop, then questions are raised about the types of educational experiences that international students encounter in western classrooms.

Canadian universities and colleges are among the leading destinations for international students in the world.<sup>2</sup> These institutions develop strategies to achieve budgetary goals by attracting international students/clients (Bradshaw, 2011). In 2008 alone Canada hosted 178,227 international students at all levels of education, which was an increase of over 100,000 students since 1998 (Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada, 2010). Nova Scotia hosts the fifth most international students in a ranking of the

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<sup>1</sup> Welch and Denman (1997) detail the history of peripatetic scholars tracing a lineage to Confucius who traveled the countries that would become China (551-479 BCE) and to the 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek Sophists through the Middle Ages to today.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development statistics included in its publication, *Highlights from Education at a Glance, 2010*, Canada attracts 5.5% of the market for international students, which places Canada sixth in an international ranking behind the United States (19%), the United Kingdom (10%), Germany (7.5%), France (7%), and Australia (6.8%) (OECD, 2010b, p. 37).

Canadian provinces (Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada, 2010)<sup>3</sup>. Each year approximately five thousand of students arrive in Nova Scotia for educational purposes, while contributing millions of dollars to the provincial economy.<sup>4</sup> With more international students entering the country each year there is a need for research into how these students, and their instructors, experience this mode of educational delivery in Canada. Research in this area will provide instructors and students with important insights into how educational relationships operate within western classroom settings.

The purpose of this research project is to present an ethnographic study of students' and instructors' experiences in an international education program with the intent to explain how educational relationships are affected by the commodification of educational services. Erickson defines ethnographic work as a study that "... treats a social unite of any size as a whole but that the ethnography portrays events, at least in part, from the points of view of the actors involved in the events" (1984, p. 52). In this way, an ethnographic study can be designed to explore the nature of relationship in the research setting and connect those relationships with contexts beyond the classroom.

The educational relationships that are the main focus of this thesis are those existing between faculty and students, and which are formed through teaching and learning processes in the classroom. I contend that the nature of this type of relationship requires re-assessment given the current critiques of international education that focus on the entrepreneurialism of educational institutions in the international market and the commodification of educational services in North America (Shumar, 1997; Slaughter &

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<sup>3</sup> The rankings for the number of students by province are as follows: Ontario 65,833; British Columbia 50,221; Quebec 28,010; Alberta 14,433; Nova Scotia 5,802; Manitoba 4,873; Saskatchewan 3,656; New Brunswick 3,263; Newfoundland & Labrador 1,524; Prince Edward Island 521; Yukon, Northwest Territories, & Nunavut 87 (Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada, 2010, p. 15).

<sup>4</sup> In 2008, international students contribute 5.5 billion dollars to the Canadian economy in the form of tuition fees and living expenses. \$168,340,000 was spent by international students in Nova Scotia. Expenditures by province: Ontario \$2,162,252,000; British Columbia \$1,423,161,000; Quebec \$1,025,042,000; Alberta \$364,584,000; Nova Scotia \$168,340,000; Manitoba \$115,807,000; Saskatchewan \$99,695,000; New Brunswick \$88,915,000; Newfoundland & Labrador \$38,145,000; Prince Edward Island \$12,864,000; Yukon, Northwest Territories, & Nunavut \$1,214,000 (Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada, 2010, p. 24).

Leslie, 1997; Spring, 1998; Gumpert, 2000; Chan, 2004; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). Particularly relevant to this topic is the debate as to whether the provision of educational services facilitated in the classroom through teaching and learning should be described by the principles of a commodity exchange. I propose that the effective educational interactions between instructors and students in the classroom are representative of the principles of a reciprocal gift exchange. However, the trend towards commodification of educational services in western countries interferes with the operation of educational relationships, which creates ambiguity about the nature of those relationships.

In my analysis I rely on theories about commodity and gift-giving exchanges to explore how students negotiate their participation as gift-givers/recipients in a gift exchange and as consumers in a commodity exchange. In this case study, the client paid for students to study in a program facilitated by an overseas educational institution. Students were only financially responsible in the event of withdrawal or removal from the program. It is my contention that students' understanding of the nature of their educational relationships informs their responses to educational processes (Martínez-Alemán, 2007, p. 579). With this in mind, an analysis into the nature of educational relationships should assist in uncovering the possible effects of commodification. Theories related to gift exchanges and commodity exchanges will be discussed in detail in chapter two.

I understand the problems that are associated with labeling western knowledge in an international education program as a gift exchange. There is a troubling history of western educators imposing their knowledge on non-western students through imperialistic educational programs in countries around the world (Malinowski, 1936; Phillips, 1992; Miller, 1996). The spread of western education in this way has also been labeled as a gift for non-western societies. It is not my intention to state that the students in this case study benefited from knowledge merely by being exposed to western teaching. Rather, I employ the illustration of the gift exchange to demonstrate the importance educational relationships free of commodification in order to expose the ways that the current neo-liberal form of globalization has contributed to the commodification of education in the international market. To provide context for this argument, I will

briefly discuss the concepts of international education, globalization, and human capital to demonstrate the pressures on international students to acquire credentials from western educational institutions.

### *International Education*

There are a number of different activities contributing to the proliferation of international education. These activities include, but are not limited to, the cross-border delivery of educational services, branch campuses, research networks, publications, conferences, marketing, public-private sector partnerships across borders, and student mobility. Internationalization of higher education means different things to different people due to the variety of activities that are involved with its processes. For the purposes of this thesis, I employ a definition of international education provided by Knight, who defines international education as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (2004, p. 11). This definition identifies internationalization as a process that varies among institutions and in different countries. Each educational institution and each country may approach international education differently, but activities that integrate intercultural and global dimensions into educational processes advance internationalization.

International education is an attractive option for many students because of the popular perception that the interdependence of the global economy encourages individuals to access a preparatory cosmopolitan education (Morrow & Torres, 2000, p. 41). Cosmopolitan education is based on ideas that a form of global knowledge will assist individuals to interpret cultural differences and avoid miscommunications. Interconnections within the global economy are complex as economic, political and social relationships take shape across international boundaries. Guruz explains that demand for cross-cultural education programs is high because “International relations of all kinds – confrontational, collaboration, political, cultural, and commercial – require people on all sides who know about each other’s history, culture, social fabric, strengths, and weakness” (2008, p. 141). A cosmopolitan education is thought to be an asset for

workers in the global economy. In response to the demand, educational institutions offer programs designed to increase the international competencies of students.

Educational institutions respond to demands for training, upgrading skills, and teaching knowledge. As a result, the cross-border delivery of education and training services is a rapidly growing market. Cross-border delivery of education and training services is an arrangement in which an educational institution, such as a university or college, provides its services to students who reside in another country (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). In many cases, educational institutions develop innovative programs designed to meet specific needs of their student/clients.

The willingness of educational institutions to participate in a global education market raises some questions about internationalization. Critics argue that international education programs are profit-driven initiatives launched by universities/colleges to gain access to new revenue sources. In this way of viewing international education, a for-profit rationale comes at the expense of developing quality educational experiences for students. Naidoo & Jamieson contend that the for-profit approach to internationalization results in hastily developed programs that have the potential to lack significant substance (2005, p. 38). This criticism argues that economic relationships become the primary concern for institutions, which overly contributes to the commodification of educational services.

### *Globalization*

Anthropological definitions of globalization are often quite complex, contested and include explanations for a number of global processes and one might even say, rather poorly defined and unclear. Most definitions rather vaguely identify the intensification of global interconnections between localities as the direct result of processes related to globalization (Inda & Rosaldo, 2008, p. 4). Since a number of works have tended to ill-define this process, and because I recognize the importance of operationalising concepts, the definition of globalization that I employ is provided by Inda and Rosaldo. These authors manage to more coherently link a number of salient processes, stating that globalization involves multiple processes operating at a global scale, permeating national

boundaries, integrating and interconnecting local cultures in new space-time combinations making the world more interconnected in reality and experience (2008, p. 6). While this definition is also somewhat vague in relation to the reality of the global economy, it does identify the important fact that global processes that intensify interconnections are the effects of flows of people, commodities, ideas, and capital that are more mobile than at any time previous. Globalization is a historical moment in which local cultures are under pressure to become more receptive to global processes.

The processes associated with globalization are deeply connected with those of the internationalization of education. A critical approach to globalization and internationalization argues that particular types of knowledge are being claimed as necessary to global economic competition, which has led to an increase in the international integration of educational systems. Altbach and Knight describe the results of globalization on international education to “include the integration of research, the use of English as the lingua franca for communication, the growing international labour market for scholars and scientists, the growth of communication firms and of multinational and technology publishing and the use of information technology” (2007, p. 291). As a result, globalization creates concern that international education contributes to the standardization of world knowledge.

The standardization of knowledge creates questions as to whether the current processes of internationalization supports Western the expansion of neo-liberal capitalistic globalization. World system theorists, such as Wallerstein (1974), divide the world into core and periphery regions. These regions are connected through unequal relations. Wallerstein argues that the capitalist world system creates economically exploitative relationships between core and periphery (1974, p. 15). Exploitation results in the extraction of surplus value from periphery regions, which is transferred to the core. The exploitative relationship ensures that wealth is accumulated by people in core regions reinforcing their economic dominance in the capitalist world systems

World systems theorists identify core regions, such North America and Western Europe, as the political, economic, and cultural hegemonic powers (Chen and Barnett,

2000, p. 437). Western style schooling is promoted by development institutions as the exemplary form of education for the rest of the world (Mundy, 1998, p. 460).

Development institutions have taken a technical approach to education related strategies in periphery countries. Mundy argues that this approach to education is complementary to other development programs intended to address “issues of national economic modernization, solvable through the provision of technical, depoliticized forms of Western expertise” (1998, p. 461). Internationalization of education reflects a wider development paradigm that overstates the value of western expertise as a solution to obstacles to development. Educational institutions in core regions are attributed a privileged position to those in the periphery.

A problem identified by world systems scholars is that the flow of international students has been directly related to the economic development of the host nation. Chen and Barnett conclude that “the economically powerful countries, which hold resources and expertise necessary for higher education, absorb international students in significant numbers” (2000, p. 451). The majority of students who travel for education arrive in core countries. Obtaining an education in core countries directly affects the forms of learning experienced by international students. Clayton invokes Gramscian notions of hegemony to argue that international higher education is invested with core ideologies:

“International education products mounted by multinational corporations, corporate foundations, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, and universities can be seen as hegemonic venture dedicated to engineering consent in periphery nations to a variety of inequitable and exploitative international structures and relationships” (1998, p. 484).

Universities and other education providers guide international students through a process of “intellectual socialization” by way of core curriculum, textbooks, and faculties (Clayton, 1998, p. 485). Students experience socialization through the transfer of knowledge. Not only is knowledge about economic and political systems transferred to students, but so are cultural ideologies about religion, morality, and language.

There is significant concern that the neo-liberal approach to education is problematic for internationalization processes. Universities and education providers construct their courses with minimal cultural considerations of prospective students.

Instead, these institutions are constrained by areas of education provision that can be measured, standardized, and quantified (Harris, 2008, p. 349). Cultural aspects of internationalization such as the knowledge exchange between scholars and students from different national background are less important. Harris warns that the neo-liberal approach to internationalization risks the exoticisation of cultural differences (2008, p. 348). The critique of the affects of neo-liberal capitalism on international education highlights the widespread indoctrination of market values into all areas of social life.

Giroux (2005) is highly critical of the infiltration of neo-liberalism into social life. He contends that neo-liberalism has a particularly destructive influence on social relationships: “Neoliberalism not only dissolves the bonds of sociality and reciprocity; it also undermines the nature of social obligations by defining civil society exclusively through an appeal to market-driven values” (2005, p. 3). It is important to consider the influences of neo-liberalism on education given its current state of international marketization. Neoliberalism constrains the possibilities for an empowering democratic education because the value of education is tied to market principles, which undermines non-commodified public spaces such as the classroom. Non-commodified public spaces are transitioned by applied neo-liberal theory into commercial spaces. As a result, knowledge is treated by society as capital to be used as an investment in the economy (Giroux, 2005, p. 7). The neoliberal approach to education is evident in the promotion of human capital theory.

### *Human Capital Theory*

The dominant neo-liberal institutions that advocate human capital theory are the global development institutions, such as The World Bank, World Trade Organization, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Jiang has found that these institutions promote human capital theory in their many publications about education and development (2008, p. 348). The World Bank states in its report, *Building Knowledge Economies: Advanced Strategies for Development*, that the “capacity to use knowledge effectively allows individuals, enterprises, and communities to utilize resources and improve their well-being, thereby contributing to development” (2007, p.

5). Human capital theorists value education for its ability to stimulate innovation and the application of new knowledge.

Human capital theory is based on the principle that education represents a social investment that prepares students to contribute to economic, political, and social development (Spring, 1998, p. 6). Its theorists propose that the countries that direct their economies towards knowledge-based performance will benefit from a higher economic growth rate and improved economic productivity. Society is to make extensive use of its education system in order to build individuals' skills for participation in a knowledge economy. In this way, global development institutions prepare national economies for capital penetration with the decree that education changes as the needs of the global economy change (Spring, 1998, p. 6). Learning to learn becomes an economic development strategy as rapid industrial changes require that workers to be continually involved in processes of re-training to adapt to the processes of capitalism.

Political and economic discourse about education promotes academic credentials as key factors for individual labour market successes in the global economy (Spring, 1998). Large numbers of students respond to the call for knowledge workers by enrolling in educational and vocational programs, seeking to acquire the knowledge and skills that may provide advantages in a competitive labour market. Students use their academic credentials to build skills-based resumes to attract potential employers. Life-long learning strategies implemented in many countries have meant that students may need extensive academic resumes to secure employment (Spring, 1998, p. 106). Students have come to view education as an investment in their potential. They are willing to make large investments of money, time and energy to obtain valuable credentials in the hopes that they will achieve labour market successes after graduation.

Globalization processes are linked to the development of human capital theory. These concepts are relevant to this thesis because international education is a globalized process that is shaped by flows of ideas, capital, and people. Students are being shown by development institutions that the global labour market is a competitive site. Participation in the labour market is, at times, either enhanced by the quality of a person's credentials

or constrained by limited educational experiences. International education is highly sought by students, who are willing to travel to acquire academic credentials from educational institutions in host countries. These are sites where students and faculty learn to communicate with each other as they develop their educational relationships together. The concepts described here are important for this case study because when considered together international education, globalization and human capital theory provide for the contextualization of the participants' experiences within the field site.

## ***Methodology***

### *Field Site*

The field site that I selected for this research project is located at an educational college in Nova Scotia, Canada. The college selected for this project was contracted by a client in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to develop and facilitate a leadership program for students from that country. The program was designed by the college in consultation with representatives from its client. The intention of the program was to assist recent university graduates in learning the international best practices in business and public service management. Students in the program were to become prospective candidates for employment with the client. After graduation students would potentially be offered employment within the client's organization. While enrolled in the program, the client paid the students' tuition and living expenses. Students were only responsible for repayment in the event of a withdrawal or dismissal from the program.

The program design was organized around a number of objectives. In their future roles as employees, students were to be responsible for integrating knowledge learned in the program into the organizational culture of the client. Students were expected to learn theories related to best practices in business and public services management. They were to develop their strategic and diplomatic communication skills. Team building was also an important focus within the program. Students were expected to be able to work efficiently and effectively within teams and as team leaders. This concept was reinforced

in many of activities assigned to students. Students were to learn to understand that individual personalities and motivations effect the growth of an organization.

To build on knowledge learned in the classroom, students had opportunities to observe management practices during their work placements. The program was scheduled in three phases with a work placement in-between each phase. The first placement was located in the UAE. The second placement was an international placement. The college placed students with organizations in Canada, Australia, and Singapore. The placements offered students employment and educational experiences. Faculty encouraged students to reflect on their experiences in their courses and their work placements to develop their own leadership style.

Program curriculum was divided into a number of topics. These topics were listed under the headings “Classic Studies of Leadership in Organizations,” “Learning Theory and Training Strategies for Leaders in Times of Growth,” “Leading and Managing Organizational Relationships,” “Leadership in Evolving Organizations,” “Financial Management for Leaders,” “Best Practices in Human Resources Management,” “Best Practices in Communications Management,” “Negotiation and Conflict Management,” “Leading Systematic Inquiry in Organizations,” and “Creating a Personal View of Leadership.” Program curriculum was supported by a number of different learning activities.

This site was selected because it is representative of the programs offered in the growing field of international education. While there is a significant literature that describes many other aspects of international education, the experiences of instructors and students in the classroom need to better represented in the discussion. The international education literature mainly focuses on the macro level trends, such as international education’s growing popularity among both students and educational institutions around the world (Matthews & Sindhu, 2005; Dodds, 2008; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Jiang, 2008), migratory student flows (McMahon, 1992; Chen & Barnett, 2000), and the geographical diffusion of knowledge (Clayton, 1998; Mundy, 1998; Olaniran & Agnello, 2008). While issues such as these are important, I contend that

attention needs to be directed toward the people who are engaged with educational processes in the classroom, particularly given the nature and the content of this flow is one way and capital centric (Giroux, 2005). It is the faculty and students who experience international education directly. A discussion of their experiences is a contribution from the micro-level to the larger discourse about the macro-level trends involved with international education.

I intend with this thesis to place emphasis on the educational relationships that exist within international programs and hint at the capital centric content that I might further explore at the doctoral level. This program is a unique opportunity to study with a group of students who traveled from the UAE to participate in an educational program at a Canadian college. The experience for many international students involves travelling to another country and integrating into a larger student population at a university or college. The students in this program were brought together to live, learn, and labour as a single group. They worked closely with each other and the faculty for an extensive eighteen month period. These educational relationships were very important to their experiences forming a social bond through educational processes. A thick description of the development of educational relationships in programs of this type should add to an understanding of the ways in which education is affected by commodification by attending to an analysis of interactions between the participants in this case study.

### *Research Participants*

Twenty-one people were involved as research participants, thirteen students and eight instructors from a single college program. All research participants agreed to participate in the classroom observation period. All students agreed to be interviewed about their experiences in the program. Seven instructors agreed to participate in an interview session. One instructor declined an interview, but agreed to participate in the period of observational study. The instructor claimed that others could perhaps more accurately describe course preparations and interactions with the students due to a limited role as co-facilitator and minimal contact with the students. Despite my interest in this person's insights, the instructor declined to be interviewed.

Students who participated in this study were members of a single cohort. The cohort commenced its studies in the summer of 2008. Students were first provided with a study period with classes held at a local language institute to further develop their English language skills. Classes for the leadership program started at the college in the fall. Classroom work at the college was completed in late September of 2009. Students returned to Abu Dhabi for a brief break followed by a couple months of work training with the client in the UAE. Graduates were eligible to work with the client upon completion of the program.

To gain admission into the program, students had to meet standards for a number of entrance requirements. Students were Emirati nationals who at the time of their application resided in Abu Dhabi. They were to be recent university graduates, who maintained a minimum grade point average of 2.5.<sup>5</sup> Students were to be very fluent in English and their language skills were tested to ensure that they met a minimum level of 300.<sup>6</sup> Students also had to successfully pass an interview with representatives from the college and the client.

Members of the cohort shared a number of similar personal traits. All of the students were residents of Abu Dhabi at the time they entered the program. All students had obtained some level of post-secondary education. Other than these characteristics the students in the class differed in a number of ways. The cohort included both male and female students. There were five male students and eight female students. Ages of the students ranged from the early twenties to early thirties.

As part of the design of the program students were to reflect upon the curricula based on their employment and education experiences. Members of the cohort possessed

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<sup>5</sup> Grade points average is a measure of comprehension across variety of courses. This measurement is common among post-secondary institutions around the world. Letter grades are transposed in to numerical values for each class. The numerical value is multiplied by the number of credit hours, which results in a grade point for the class or term.

<sup>6</sup> The college in this case study used the advice of a local language institute for selecting students based on English language competency. A diagnostic test was used to assess students on a scale of 0-500. The 300 level was set as the minimal level of competency to gain admission into the program.

a mixture of previous experiences in these areas. Their education levels, areas of study, previous international education experiences, and previous work experiences differed for each of the students. While this occasion was the first time that a few of the students traveled outside the UAE for school or work, some students had previously acquired work and education experiences abroad. Several students attended educational institutions in a different country, such as Australia, France, Scotland, Spain, and the United States. There were two students who had traveled on more than one occasion to study in another country.

All of the students had obtained undergraduate level degrees. Two students had completed graduate level work. Two other students had partially completed requirements for graduate degrees. These students both stated that they continued to work on their degrees while enrolled in the program. One student had received a professional diploma. Students' previous work experiences were also varied. Many of the students had previously begun a career before seeking employment with the client. Professions represented by members of the cohort included information technology, refinery technician, business analyst, interior design, accountants, and human resources. Two students had military experience. The education and work histories of the students contributed a range of past experiences within the cohort.

Instructors were selected for participation in my project based on the roster of instructors who were scheduled to teach during the observational period. In this way I would be able to adjust my interview guide to follow up with questions for instructors about observations in the classroom. Instructors were either full-time, part-time or staff hired to fulfill contract work. Each instructor taught courses that were one or two weeks in duration. An instructor or set of instructors would facilitate all classroom learning for the entire length of the course. In turn, a different instructor may take over classroom instruction for the following course. Instructors may also teach multiple courses throughout the duration of the program. Teaching assignments may be separated by weeks or months depending on the program schedule.

Each of the instructors had past experiences teaching students from a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds at the college and in other educational settings. Some instructors had experience teaching students from outside of Canada. Some instructors had also traveled to another country to teach, such Korea, Japan, and Indonesia. Others stated that they had previously taught international students, but never as a group who resided in the same location.

### *Research Design and Methods*

The data that is presented in this thesis was collected using two qualitative research methods, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. An observation period allowed for the study of interactions between participants as activities occurred in the classroom (see Appendix 1). Observations were further developed by speaking with participants during interview sessions. Interview sessions presented opportunities to test the accuracy of my observations. An interview guide was used to ground my interviews with a set of questions that were based on observations as well as the relevant literature (see Appendix 2). These sessions were designed to allow participants to speak about their experiences in the program. I designed my study like this in the expectation that participants would raise topics that they felt were important during the interview sessions. These topics provided a basis for the themes in this thesis.

The traditional participant observation approach is constrained in educational setting due to a researcher's inability to participate fully in the classroom setting. A researcher's participation in the research setting is predominantly limited to the role of an observer (Spindler & Spindler, 1997b).<sup>7</sup> However, observation as a research method alone does not provide ethnographers with enough information to construct valid conclusions about socio-cultural behavior in educational settings. Observation requires supplementation with additional research methods to test the validity of previous

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<sup>7</sup> George D. Spindler, who is a foundational figure in educational anthropology, attempted to conduct participant observation in his first study in 1968. He found the process to be difficult to manage both the assigned school work, prepare for instruction, and, at the same time, conduct effective research. Today, Spindler & Spindler (1997a) advocate for direct observation of the classroom setting in place of participant based observation.

conclusions. Interview sessions provide opportunities to build upon observational research. Anthropologists use interview sessions to explore “beyond role determined surface scripts to suggest hidden or latent dimensions of the organization of persons and of the socio-cultural matrix and their interactions” (Levy & Hollan, 1998, p. 334). Interviews are designed to encourage informants to share their particular knowledge. Their knowledge may only be available to people who have had previous experiences in the similar research settings. Conversations provide anthropologists with emic, or person-centered insights, which helps to identify further topics for investigation.

Interview sessions are a valuable ethnographic research method. The goal of interview sessions is to provide researchers with a means to disrupt conventional discursive scripts to uncover deep meanings of socio-cultural behaviour (Levy & Hollan, 1998, p. 334). These meanings lie beneath observable performative displays of cultural roles. Anthropologists approach interviewees as informants who possess individual perspectives on cultural knowledge. As informants, interviewees are experts about relationships and interactions that occur in particular research settings (Levy & Hollan, 1998, p. 335). The telling of personal experiences contributes to an analysis of ways in which informants recount their experiences. Levy and Hollan describe their experiences with interview sessions: “As we listen to a story, a statement, an account, we often come to know more about it than what it seems to say on the surface” (1998, p. 356).

For the purposes of this research project, I conducted a period of observational study in the classroom at the field site for three months. Classes were in session four days a week, Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., with a short break for lunch in the middle of the day. This was the regular schedule for most days when classes were in session. There were a few exceptions. These exceptions came when students had to make trips outside of the college to conduct interviews or meet in groups to work on projects. Also, class often ended earlier than scheduled during Ramadan. Instructors changed the schedule to take more, shorter breaks, skip their regular lunch breaks and end class earlier in the day.

While in the classroom, I was able to observe interactions between the research participants. Most days were organized around a number of repeated activities. Classes often began with an interactive lecture, during which time instructors introduced and reviewed new material with students. Instructors stood near to or paced the front of the room while students sat around tables. Students asked and answered questions with their instructors. At times, students also worked alone or in groups to discuss topics or questions assigned by an instructor. During group exercises students would arrange themselves around tables to discuss the material. Instructors would walk the room listening to or joining in discussions with students. Students also made short informal presentations to the group during discussion periods. The interactive lecture format was the predominant learning activity used by instructors to guide the day's activities.

There were a number of learning activities that I observed during the research period. Formal in-class presentations were regular activities. Students were responsible for the organization and presentation of material to the class. Groups of students collaborated on presentations scheduled for the end of the week. Preparations for student presentations took place both inside and outside of class time. I observed as students discussed the material, assigned responsibilities, presented ideas, and developed their presentations. These events allowed me to insights into how students interacted to prepare their assignments, responded to the material, and refined their skills through close co-operation, and at times conflict, with one another. These interactions helped to cultivate my awareness of the varied situations that research participants experienced.

In addition to the observation period, each research participant agreed to partake in one interview session. The length of the session varied from an hour to two and a half hours depending on how much time research participants were able to share and how quickly we worked through the interview guide. Interviews with students were conducted during the third month of my fieldwork, which was also the last month of the program before students returned home. Faculty was interviewed in the third month of my fieldwork, but there were a couple of interview sessions conducted shortly after the program ended. The timing of these sessions offered research participants opportunities

to reflect on their past eighteen months in the program, their experiences, and their educational relationships.

Questions used in the interview sessions focused on research participants' educational experiences in the program. Students were asked about their experiences with teaching and learning in the classroom, their relationships with participants in the program, and their experiences as international students. Instructors were asked about the development of the program, their interactions with students, particularly how instructors communicate course curriculum to students, and how they understood students' responses to activities related to the program. Research participants shared their perspectives on these topics which added to the data collected during the observational study period.

My research design was guided by previous research in educational settings. Anthropologists who conduct research within educational settings, like the majority of anthropologists who utilize participant observation, advise that any conclusions about observed behavior may only be obtained after witness to repetitive interactions (Gearing & Epstein, 1982; Wilcox, 1982; Wolcott, 1987; Spindler & Spindler, 1997b). Observations inform the contextualization of relationships in the classroom and assist ethnographers' view of a "framework of relationships of the immediate setting, but is pursued, as necessary, into context beyond," and provides ethnographers with a point to begin further investigation (Spindler, 1982, p. 6). The observation of repeated behaviors during classroom interactions informed my conclusions about the cultural transmission of knowledge that I further investigated during participant interview sessions.

### *Ethical Procedures*

This research project required that individuals agreed to allow for an observational study period in the classroom. Participants also had the choice to participate in an interview session. The data collected through these methods is sensitive for both students and faculty. To ensure that research participants were comfortable with the objectives of this project and with my presence in their classrooms as an observer, I explained any potential risks in an information letter. Research participants were supplied

with an information letter prior to obtaining their consent to participation. This letter informed participants that my research was independent from the administration of the college and the client's organization. Participants were asked for their consent to participate in the project at a later date, but prior to the commencement of the research period. All research participants signed a consent form to indicate their preferences. The consent form was signed by participants while I was present.

Research participants indicated their agreement allowing for direct quotations in the final edition of my thesis on the same consent form. Sessions were audio recorded for all interviews, but for one student who indicated a preference not to be recorded. In this case, I took hand written notes while the interviewee spoke. In places where quotations appear in this thesis, I have removed any identifiable information about the research participants, the college, or the name of the program. Otherwise, the quotations appear in the words of research participants. All grammatical errors that appear are maintained to ensure the authenticity of the quotation.

To protect confidentiality for research participants I have taken steps to ensure their anonymity is protected for this project. The names of research participants, the college, and the program have been masked and I have only identified whether a particular research participant is either a student or an instructor. I have used a number system in order to identify instructor or student for quotation purposes (i.e. instructor #1 or student #3). In this way I will be able to link comments together in the text without jeopardizing the anonymity of research participants.

### *Chapter Layout*

The second chapter is devoted to a discussion about the theories related to commodity and gift exchanges. I provide a general discussion of these theories before turning to an examination about how these theories could be applied to educational settings. These theories are valuable sources for understanding the nature of educational relationships that exist between faculty and students. Each grouping of theories offers a contrasting model that demonstrates the different principles that guide the operation of each type of exchange. To understand the influences of internationalization on

educational relationships, it is important to identify how these relationships are understood by the participants.

The third chapter is a presentation of my research findings. The purpose of this chapter is to present the key themes that emerged from the data collected for this case study. Each theme was identified through a review of my research notes and transcribed interviews. I relied on data collected from faculty and students to provide a narrative for their experiences in the program. This chapter is organized into two sections in order to highlight the practices involved with each type of exchange that were active, or not, in the experiences of the research participants.

The fourth chapter is a discussion of the research findings. I apply the theories related to each type of exchange to explore its application to the educational setting in this case study. The purpose of this discussion is to evaluate the applicability of each of the theories using the research findings. To do so, I follow the criteria established by social theorists as described in chapter two to assess the ways in which educational relationships operate in an international education program.

The final chapter offers general conclusions drawn from this case study about the affects of internationalization on educational relationships. I concluded as to whether educational relationships are representative of either a gift or commodity exchange. As well, I suggest some areas where future research could be undertaken using the models developed within this thesis.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Commodity & The Gift: Theoretical Applications for Educational Settings**

The commodification of educational services raises questions about the future of educational relationships. Of particular interest are possible ways in which commodification may affect teaching and learning in student-faculty relationships. Commodification is linked to changes in the subjectivities of people involved in educational relationships. As noted in the previous chapter, development institutions have pushed these processes and nurtured the growing trend towards students identifying as consumers of education products (Shumar, 1997; Gumport, 2000; Chan, 2004; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). In other words, to see education as a commodity available to those who can pay for it rather than a right that is available to all by dint of being human. By enrolling in education and training programs students express their desire to acquire credentials and qualifications. To graduate requires that students invest time, money, and energy into their studies. As consumers students want to be satisfied that they have acquired a return on their investments. Educational institutions are unable to guarantee that graduation and satisfaction are relatable. This situation creates significant issues for the future of educational relationships. However, there is an argument that the commodification model overly focuses on economic exchange that takes place between students and educational institutions (Amariglio & Callari, 1993; Cooper, 2004; Martínez-Alemán, 2007). This argument is based on the idea that student-faculty relationships can be conceptualized as a gift exchange that operates within a larger commodity exchange-based economic system. Elements of gift-giving relationships do persist in educational settings. Yet, students may not be entirely bound by obligations of the gift. Instead, they shift between recognition of their roles as participants in a gift exchange and consumers of educational products to negotiate situations that arise inside and outside of the classroom.

The first section of this chapter provides a brief overview of the reasons as to why the cross-border delivery of educational services is a rapidly growing area of the

education sector. International education can be connected to a for-profit motivation within educational institutions (Chan, 2004; Knight, 2004; Guruz, 2008). The next section includes a discussion of commodification theory. Then, commodification theory is applied to educational services to discuss recent changes to subjectivities of actors in the education sector. Commodification theory relates directly to changes in the subjectivities of actors involved in market exchanges. The next section provides a description of gift theory. The final section will discuss the application of gift theory to student-faculty educational relationships.

### *Market Pressures in the Education Sector*

The for-profit approach to educational services is a response from educational institutions to a financial crisis. There is a great deal of financial pressure on educational institutions to actively promote education and training services in the market. Financial pressures on educational institutions results from budgetary constraints caused by decreases in public funding in the educational sector. Canadian federal and provincial governments continue to reduce their funding levels for post-secondary education. Federal transfer payment amounts received by the provinces have been cut dramatically. Fourteen billion dollars for education were cut when the Established Programs Fund entitlement and the Canada Assistance Plan were combined into the Canadian Health and Social Transfer (CHST) (Fisher & Rubenson, 1998, p. 81). Education funding also declined under the CHST's successor, the Canada Social Transfer. Federal reductions in transfer payments to the provinces constrain provincial post-secondary education budgets. Provincial governments allocate less money for post-secondary educational institutions due to their own budgetary issues. Federal and provincial budget cuts increase operational costs for educational institutions. As a result, educational institutions are in need of new revenue sources to counter any potential for budgetary shortfalls. A revenue source is the rapidly growing, but highly competitive, international education market.

Educational institutions participate in a crowded international market where institutions vie for new students and clients. There are nearly 100 million students enrolled in over 15,000 educational institutions around the world (Chan, 2004, p. 34).

Competition in the market is heightened as educational institutions generate large revenue amounts from international student enrolments. A recent study conducted by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada found that international students paid Canadian educational institutions \$5.5 billion in tuitions and fees in 2008 (Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada, 2010, p. 7). The economic stakes for Canadian education institutions are quite high. Each educational institution formulates its own strategies for how to approach participation in the market. Not all institutions will participate in the international market in the same way, but it is clear that there are large revenue amounts available for institutions that attract high numbers of international students and clients.

Competition between educational institutions stems from a high demand for education and training services that contain international components to teaching and learning. Demand is high because there is a popular perception that the interdependence of the global economy encourages individuals to access a preparatory cosmopolitan education (Morrow & Torres, 2000, p. 41). Cosmopolitan education is based on ideas that a global knowledge will assist individuals to interpret cultural differences and avoid miscommunications. Interconnections within the global economy are complex as economic, political and social relationships form across international boundaries. A cosmopolitan education is said to be an asset for future knowledge workers. Educational institutions offer programs that are designed to build the international competencies of students in response to demands for cosmopolitan education.

Marketing international education and training services is successful because students desire intercultural knowledge to provide them with an edge in the labour market. Mobility within the international labour market, increases in the cultural diversity of communities and workplaces, and the rising number of cultural economic, political and social issues that involve people at regional, national and international levels are each factors that contribute to reasons why educational institutions are able to successfully market their international programs to students and clients (Knight, 2004, p. 26). Students with interests in acquiring intercultural knowledge seek educational institutions that are reputable internationally.

Educational institutions advertise their international reputations to attract prospective students and clients. The college presented in this case study advertises its own experiences with international program design on its website. The description of its international programs mentions the recognition that the college received from development institutions, such as the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency. The college advertises that its programs are facilitated by instructors who have experiences with teaching students in international contexts. These examples support the college's claim to a strong international reputation. The college's approach is representative of advertisements designed to attract students/clients to international education services.

The success of cross-border education demonstrates that institutions are able to develop innovative programs in order to meet market demand for intercultural educational experiences. The college offers prospective international students/clients programs that are custom designed for specific educational needs. The leadership program in this case study is representative of its custom-designed international education programs. In this case study, course designers developed a leadership program in response to requests from its client. The program was custom-designed to educate students about a variety of topics that its client asked to have addressed during the training of its future employees. The client requested a leadership program with a curriculum centered on international standards and practices for business and administration. A goal of the program was to inform a group of next generation workers about standards and practices outside of the UAE. Students were to use this knowledge to help shape the client's organizational culture by applying ideas learned from their international experiences in the program.

These types of programs are representative of institutions' entrepreneurial approach to the international market. Market pressures that accompany globalization, the role of education in training the labour force for a post-industrial economy, and increases to operational costs are motivations for educational institutions to develop programs for sale in the international education market (Naidoo & James, 2005, p. 38). These types of programs represent activities by educational institutions described by Slaughter and

Leslie as “academic capitalism” (1997, p. 8). Slaughter and Leslie describe academic capitalism as market and market-like behaviours exhibited by educational institutions. Market behaviours are intended to generate profit. The range of these activities include patenting and subsequent royalty and licensing agreements, spinoff companies, arm’s length corporations, and university-industry partnerships that have a profit component (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997, p. 11). Market-like behaviours also involve competition between institutions for revenue sources. Revenue sources include student tuition and fees, university-industry partnerships, external grants and contracts. These entrepreneurial activities are market-like because they involve a competition for funds from external resource providers (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997, p. 11). Slaughter and Leslie use the term academic capitalism to draw attention to the ways in which market forces shape decisions made by educational institutions, which lead to the development of their entrepreneurial activities.

Entrepreneurialism as a response to market forces is a significant reorientation for educational institutions. The education field was not supposed to be as susceptible to political and economic forces as other industries because education produces its own type of capital. Education institutions produce academic capital. The value of academic capital was assessed by professional standards, such as intellectual development, peer recognition, and contribution to knowledge, rather than political or economic standards (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p. 39). Academic standards were historically tied to a value structure that developed within educational institutions. However, traditional conceptions of academic success have altered due to educational institutions’ participation in the market.

Academic success for education institutions now includes economic values. A for-profit approach to services means that educational institutions must attend to economic standards. Economic standards are those variables that are quantifiable, such as student enrolments numbers and revenue amounts generated from entrepreneurial activities. Inclusion of economic standards in measurements of academic success further encourages educational institutions to continue to align their activities closer to the market. As a result, knowledge is packaged and sold to potential students and clients

under market conditions and often across national boundaries (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p. 40). The sale of services is one area where education institutions embed their entrepreneurial activities within the structure of the market. The growing emphasis on economic standards calls for an assessment of whether education and training services have become commodities. Further, what are the possible effects of commodification on teaching and learning in student-faculty relationships?

### *Commodity Theory*

Commodification is a theoretical model that is useful in discussions about recent changes to educational relationships. Commodification is a process whereby goods and services that did not have a commercial value previously are transformed into a commodity. In a commodity production system a commodity is the material form of social relations that exists as a good or a service produced for sale in the market (Erickson & Murphy, 2003, p. 44-45). Value of a commodity fluctuates based on supply and demand principles. Supply is the availability of the product and demand is the extent to which people articulate a desire to either want or need a commodity. In a commodity production system almost any object can be exchanged for money. Money is "...a generalized medium of exchange and simultaneously serves as a means to the measurement of values, and storage of wealth" (Cooper, 2004, p. 7). Commodity exchanges are most often short-term, impersonal transactions that take place between owners and consumers of commodities. Commodity owners and consumers are mutually disinterested in each other with the exception of any requisite legal obligations attached to transactions. Commodity exchanges alter social relations as human relationships are reified as relationships between things.

Reification is a transformation of social relationships from relationships between people to relationships between things. This transformation appears in Taussig's discussion of a peasant mining community in the Cauca Valley, Columbia. Taussig contrasts the commodity based societies belief in the objectiveness of alienable labour with a society whose relationships are rooted in communal reciprocal labour practices (1980, p. 4). He found that peasants reacted to the introduction of the capitalist mode of

production by making alterations to their cosmology to account for the transition to a commodity based society. This change required that the peasant group obscure commoditized relationships within new forms of mysticism. To accompany the change to capitalism, a devil figure is introduced as an intermediary between peasant workers and the western owners of their mine (Taussig, 1980, p. 15). This symbolic figure is positioned between these actors to present an appearance of reciprocal work, which was predominant in productive relationships prior to the introduction of commodity based work practices. The peasant workers attempt to maintain their former economic relationships as the community makes the transition to alienable productive relationships.

A commodity represents the social character of labour, but a commodity appears as an objective form. The objective form of a commodity disguises all other relationships that exist between people who produce a commodity with the exception of their labour relations. The objective form is the exchange value of a commodity, which is the rational concealment of the fundamental nature as a commodity or a relationship between people. Productive outputs of labour relationships manifest as commodities. Commodities are social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible (Marx, 1867, p. 72). Reification requires that members of a society learn to satisfy their needs through a commodity exchange system (Lukacs, 1971, p. 91). This system creates conditions for people to desire commodities that they believe will satisfy their needs.

Commodity fetishism is a mystification of human relations that occurs when social relationships are transformed or mediated by objectified relationships between things. Fetishism refers particularly to the symbolized power of an object. People fetishize objects by attributing special powers to that object. If people start to believe that a fetish object has certain powers, then those powers become intrinsic to the fetish object (Marx, 1867, p. 26, 47). If enough people believe that the fetish object has an intrinsic power, then a fetish object is able to function as if its power is intrinsic and not a human attribution. Taussig (1980), echoing Marx, explains that the socially conditioned appearance of commodities is “a mystification in which the entire social context conspires, so to speak, to mask itself” (p. 33). As a result, the commodity is given a mystical power to re-organize aspects of social life.

Mystification is created by a failure to separate the different values of a commodity. A commodity has two values, use-value and exchange-value. Use-value is determined independently of the labour involved in its production. Instead, use-value is the explicit manner in which a good or a service fulfills a specific need. Exchange-value differs from use-value. Exchange-value is the quantitative expression of the amount of other commodities that could be exchanged for another commodity. Exchange-value does not represent a concrete price because prices may fluctuate at any given moment due to changes in the market. The failure to separate use-value and exchange-value means that the value of a commodity is intrinsic to the object and not the product of human labour. Shumar explains that commodities should be understood through a separation in the two types of values: “By denying the primacy of human relationships in the production of value, through a collapsing or condensing of exchange-value and use-value, a capitalist system produces the illusion that value emanates from the object itself” (1997, p. 27). The failure to separate the two types of value obscures social relationships and naturalizes commoditized relationships. Criteria such as time, efficiency, accumulation and profit all appear as natural categories for aspects of social life.

### *Commodity Theory Applied to Education*

There is a strong argument that marketization transforms education into a commodity. Education commodities are goods and services produced by educational institutions. Commodities produced by educational institutions include, but are not limited to, education and training courses and programs, publications, research products, and branded bookstore items (clothing, bags, key chains, etc.). Educational products that are particularly affected by commodification are education and training services. Education services are particularly affected by commodification because the commodification process transforms the outcomes of teaching and learning processes into an object. Education is a specialized object because there is a popular perception that education has powers to do things for us and to do things to us, for example, to improve students’ intellectual capacities through learning processes (Shumar, 1997, p. 151). At the same time, it is a common belief that education has a power to improve students’ post-graduation chances for labour market successes. The belief that education has these types

of powers is at the core of the educational product. Notions of learning from books and sharing ideas are secondary to packaging, marketing, selling, and purchasing educational products.

The economic rationality that has taken hold in educational institutions has led to a rearrangement of education into a productive industry. Educational institutions' need for capital accumulation has made production and consumption a central concern. The emphasis on a search for new markets and new clients influences the types of social activities enacted within education institutions. Production and consumption of education and training services reifies educational relationships as market relationships. Reification of educational relationships as market relationships is evident in changes to the subjectivities of students, teachers and administrators. Commodification influences the subjectivities of these three types of actors, and transforms the subjectivities of faculty members into workers, students into consumers, and administrators into business managers (Shumar, 1997, p. 140). Relationships between students, teachers, and administrators are mediated by an object that is an educational commodity. Subjectivities in education processes are re-organized around this object to support its commoditization.

Reasons that students are willing to take on the role of consumers are varied. Political and economic discourse about education promotes academic credentials as key factors for labour market success in the global economy (Spring, 1998). Students respond to the call for knowledge workers by enrolling in education and training programs to learn skills that may provide advantages in a competitive labour market. Students use their academic credentials to build skills resumes to attract potential employers. Life-long learning strategies implemented in many countries have meant that students may need extensive academic resumes to secure employment (Spring, 1998, p. 106).

However, inflation of academic credentials is a problem for both students and education institutions. Education credentials are not valued at previous levels. Good jobs that had required college educations now may require higher levels of education from more prestigious schools (Shumar, 1997, p.131). In an over-educated labour market, students with the highest levels of education are likely to find employment in the few

select jobs that require the most qualifications. The problem for many students is that in an over-educated labour market there are few jobs for those with the highest levels of education. Therefore, those students who are unable to gain employment at a level that matches their qualifications must accept jobs that require lower levels of education. This trend is repeated for students who have slightly less than the highest levels of education. They too must seek jobs that require fewer qualifications. Academic credentials are devalued as a result of this trend (Van de Werfhorst & Anderson, 2005, p. 322). Inflation of academic credentials reinforces the role of students as consumers.

Students as consumers want returns on their investments. Student-consumers desire assurances that graduation will lead to quality jobs in choice fields. Students have come to view credentials as a means to enhance their utility (Gumport, 2000, p. 80). Business and political leaders instruct students to acquire knowledge and skills that will contribute to learning societies and to participate in the global economy. Students are told that those who acquire knowledge and skills will be afforded income and status through a system of credentials (Spring, 1997, 104). Power resides in the credential system. Credentials have power over students' attainment of income and status after graduation, while in reality there are no guarantees that education will contribute to individual success as other factors may have a role in employment opportunities, such as class, age, gender, ethnicity, and race (McMullin, 2004, p. 202). However, education is promoted as a route to success to ensure that students will continue to consume services produced by education institutions, and, in turn, use acquired skills to help grow economies.

Production and consumption needs cause producers to consider the appearances of their goods and services. Appearances matter because the images of products will have an influence over whether a good or a service will be consumed. There is a tendency for producers and consumers to think about the appearance of a product separately from its substantive use (Shumar, 1997, p. 15). In the case of education, the commodity that attracts students to educational services is the credential that they will receive upon graduation. The credential appears as a commodity symbol. A symbol functions not only to produce desire for an object, but the symbol becomes the good itself (Shumar, 1997, p. 11). Symbols operate within a system of symbols where the value of a symbol is

measured comparatively in relation to other symbols. For example, in a consideration of credentials as symbols the value of a credential is measured against the value of all other credentials.

Educational institutions respond to demands for the types of credentials desired by students. Gumport (2005) explains that the need to satisfy their customers is a foremost consideration for course designers: “Consumer taste and satisfaction can become elevated in the minds of those responsible for designing academic services and programs” (p. 80). However, issues around customer satisfaction may create problems for educational institutions. Education is not a commodity service that offers an easily measurable return for consumers. Employment earnings or successes in particular fields are means to determine whether students’ academic credentials result in income and status achievements, but it is difficult to measure students’ satisfaction with education as a purchasable commodity. Customer satisfaction is a complex issue for educational institutions to negotiate because consumers suffer boredom and their products are criticized, so education producers consider very carefully how their products and services appear to potential customers.

### *Gift Theory*

In contrast to commodity economies, gift economies are based on giving away a portion of what is produced. A gift can be any object, material or non-material. Gift exchanges are transacted for a variety of reasons. Mainly, gift-giving is a means to maintain social relations and to improve solidarity. It is also associated with gaining prestige and establishing bonds of reciprocal obligations. Gift-giving bonds are representative of more than economic relationships. Gift economies are oriented towards needs rather than profits. This aspect differentiates gift economies from commodity economies. Gift-giving is a part of a shared culture with guiding principles about generosity and reciprocity (Martínez-Alemán, 2004, p. 7). Its characteristics include generosity, reciprocity, morality, and gratitude. These characteristics are evident in the description of gift exchanges.

To give a gift is a symbolic transmission that transfers something of one's self to another person to communicate meaning in that relationship. Gift-giving bonds a relationship between a gift-giver and a recipient. Through the transmission of a gift, part of the identity of a gift-giver is transmitted in the exchange to the recipient. The identity of the gift-giver is embedded in the gift. The value of a gift is not in the concrete objectiveness of the gift. The gift is not just a thing. The inseparability of the identity of a gift-giver from a gift itself makes the value of a gift incalculable. Martínez-Alemán argues that the value of a gift rests within the relationship between a gift-giver and a recipient: "Understood in this way, the gift is representational or symbolic of the self and not a 'material state of property' categorically un-symbolic" (2007, p. 576). Giving of the self as part of the gift establishes a relationship bond based on obligations of reciprocity.

Gift exchanges are guided by principles of reciprocity. The gift has three reciprocal obligations for a gift-giver and a receiver. These three obligations are obligations to give, to receive, and to repay (Mauss, 2000). Each obligation of the gift has its own set of principles that guide action. The first obligation is to give. The obligation to give begins or continues a gift-giving cycle. To give a gift signals an intention to maintain a relationship on the part of the gift-giver. The recipient has an obligation to receive a gift once it is given. A recipient who refuses a gift breaks a social bond, which signals the possible end of a relationship. The third obligation is the obligation to repay. Gift recipients have an obligation to repay the gift-giver. A gift must be reciprocated to demonstrate that a recipient is worthy of the gift, which in turn maintains a relationship by strengthening the social bond. Reciprocity is an inherent structure that is shared by everyone in gift-giving relationships (Erickson & Murphy, 2003, p. 94). Failure to fulfill any of these obligations may mean a loss of respect amongst the participants.

Principles of reciprocity central to gift exchanges contrast with those of commodity exchanges. Principles of reciprocity do not exist in commodity exchanges because the characteristics of a commodity differ from those of a gift. A commodity exists based on the notion of property rights. Commodities are objects that are owned, bought and sold. Through the purchase of commodities property ownership rights are transferred from the owner to the buyer. Gregory (1982) describes commodity exchanges

as alienable. Alienability is a central principle of a commodity exchange. Commodity exchanges are alienable because ownership of an object transfers through purchase transactions. Once a commodity is purchased, the original owner no longer has any responsibility to that object and is alienated from the object. Ownership of the object is transferred to its new owner. The relationship between owner and buyer exists for only as long as it takes to complete the transaction.

In contrast to commodity exchange, the principle of reciprocity that guides gift exchanges makes gift-giving an inalienable transaction. Gift exchange is inalienable because, unlike in commodity exchanges, the identity of the gift-giver is enmeshed within the gift. The fact that the identity of a gift-giver is bound to the gift creates a power that causes the recipient to reciprocate. In a gift-exchange ownership of an object does not end with the gift-giving transaction. The relationship between giver and recipient does not end in a single transaction. Instead, a gift-debt forms the basis for a relationship between people that exists until a gift has been returned. This moral relationship between gift-givers and recipients contributes to building social cohesion among people through a cycle of reciprocal obligation based on gratitude (Simmel, 1950, p. 392-394). In this way cohesive social bonds are established through gift-giving exchanges.

Recognition of past gift-giving interactions reminds recipients of a need to reciprocate to ensure continuity in the relationship. The feeling of gratitude develops from gift-giving interactions to become a moral basis for social relationships. Feelings of gratitude are motivations for a future gift-giving. This feeling is a powerful source for social cohesion.

### *Gift Theory Applied to Education*

There is an argument that education should not be properly considered to be a commodity. Commodification theories have a tendency to reduce educational relationships in the classroom to economic relationships. Martínez-Alemán argues that the debate about the application of academic credentials in the market re-directs attention from the symbolic nature of educational relationships between instructors and students towards a relationship that centers on economic production (2007, p. 580). Gift theorists

would argue that students have two distinct relationships with faculty. The financial relationship that exists between students/clients and educational institutions should be considered separately from the educational relationships. The educational relationship is in the form of a teaching and learning relationship between students and faculty. For critics of commodification theories education reflects an exchange relationship between faculty and students that operates in the classroom under principles of a gift economy.

Knowledge is the gift that circulates within educational relationships. A means to assess whether education meets the criteria of a gift exchange is to further explore the three obligations as described by Mauss (2000). As mentioned, Mauss outlines three moral obligations of the gift; to give, to receive and to reciprocate. Cooper (2004) uses Mauss's gift exchange theory to assess reciprocal obligations in educational relationships. The obligation to give is the responsibility of teachers. Teachers possess knowledge. Their knowledge is to be passed along to their students through teaching and learning processes. Teachers prepare to transfer their knowledge to students using their training and past experiences (Cooper, 2004, p. 8).

Students have an obligation to receive the gift of knowledge. Expressions of this obligation include, but are not limited to, student attendance, participation in class, and assignments. In turn, students are responsible for an obligation to give back to faculty. An expectation is set that students have an obligation to perform their assignments to the best of their abilities. Students continue the gift-giving exchange by passing along their knowledge to others. Through a cycle of reciprocal interactions faculty and students fulfill their obligations in gift-giving exchanges.

Students who accept education as a gift devote time and energy to learning. During the learning period students prepare themselves for changes that will come with new knowledge and ideas. Students are unable to re-circulate the gift until they have the power to pass it on. The power to pass along knowledge comes from learning. Martínez-Alemán explains circulation in this gift-giving exchange cycle: "The gift (ideas and knowledge) moves only when the student has the power to give the gift away, and it is at this moment when we can say that the gift has transformed the recipient or that the

faculty's ideas have transformed the student in some way" (2007, p. 577). Social bonds form between faculty and students as something of the identities of instructors are contained within the gift of knowledge that passes to students.

Social bonds that form in educational relationships present an issue for determining whether or not education should be classified as a commodity. For education to be classified as a commodity, the exchange would have to be alienable. However, an educational exchange is not alienable. Educational relationships are not short-term transactions conducted by disinterested parties. Instead, educational relationships interconnect people in what Cooper (2004) describes as a process of expanded reproduction of knowledge. The process of expanded reproduction of knowledge occurs when an instructor's inalienable knowledge is shared with students, who receive this knowledge as newly acquired (Cooper, 2004, p. 8-9). Students incorporate new knowledge with their own inalienable knowledge. Inalienable knowledge shared in educational relationships is a basis for its bonds. These types of bonded relationships do not develop from the relationships involved in commodity exchanges.

Trust is important to strengthening social bonds formed through gift-giving exchanges in education. Educational relationships have a fundamentally moral nature. Social bonds in educational relationships rely on an implicit assumption of trust (Martínez-Alemán, 2007, p. 585). Trust adjusts the power imbalance that exists between students and faculty. Instructors are in position of power because they control knowledge. They are experts on the curriculum. Students are in an inferior position in relation to the knowledge possessed by their instructors. To adjust this power imbalance students assess trust in their relationships with instructors. Students build their sense of trust by assessing the credibility, competence and expertise of their instructors (Martínez-Alemán, 2007, p. 585). These assumptions are based on students' understanding of the learning objectives and their assessments of instructors' expertise. Instructors build trust in their students by validating students' knowledge as non-experts. They assess the abilities of students to display qualities of reasonability and trustworthiness. Faculty and students work to strengthen their bonds by building trust in their relationships with each other.

There is potential for the corporatization of education to undermine this trust in educational relationships. Trust is less important to contractual relationships. Martínez-Alemán explains that when students are considered to be, or consider themselves, education consumers then the requisite need for trust becomes less important (2007, p. 585). A social bond does not form from a contract. The contractual relationship is not a gift relationship, nor does a contractual relationship require trust because terms and responsibilities of the relationship are pre-defined. Therefore, trust matters less to relationships bonded by a contract. The issue of trust in education relationships creates a dilemma for contracted education services. If students view their educational relationships as contractual relationships, then there is potential for students to nullify or invalidate the gift, its economy, and relationships based on their assessments of faculty (Martínez-Alemán, 2007, p. 586). In a gift economy, recipients are willing to accept the gift because they trust the gift-giver. Gift-giving relationships are jeopardized when the recipient of a gift does not trust the gift-giver.

In addition to trust, gratitude is a further condition of gift-giving that exists in educational relationships. Simmel (1950) proposes that gratitude is a powerful means of social cohesion that finds its expression through gift-giving interactions (p. 389). In many cases, feelings of gratitude are reciprocal in educational relationships. In their study of gratitude, Kamvounias et al. (2008) found that not only mentees were grateful to their mentors, but mentors also expressed gratitude for their relationships with students. Mentees acknowledged their feelings as a response to a gift of opportunity to share in their mentors' knowledge. They stated that their feelings of gratitude made them want to reciprocate with a gift for their mentors. Mentors acknowledged that mentees were able to reciprocate through shared knowledge. In many instances, mentees were able to help mentors learn something new about course material or about themselves as instructors, particularly related to their communication skills or teaching style (Kamvounias et al., 2008, p. 22). This example is representative of the ways in which reciprocal giving maintains social bonds in education relationships.

Gift economies are a useful way to explore educational relationships. These relationships are based on many of the characteristics that constitute gift economy. In

their instructor roles, faculty is responsible for sharing their knowledge with students. Students have the obligation to receive the gift of knowledge and in turn to repay for the knowledge shared. These obligations are only likely to be met if other characteristics of gift-giving relationships exist. Reciprocity, generosity, trust, and gratitude are each characteristics of gift relationships that apply to educational relationships. By employing gift theory it is possible to explore norms about reciprocity, shifts in expressive behavior of subjects, and collective feelings of responsibility (Berking, 1999, p. 4). Gift theory may allow for a better understanding of recent changes to educational relationships caused by the sale of educational services in the market.

### *Conclusion*

These two models provide useful, but contrasting, means to consider the current state of educational relationships. On the one hand, commodity theory demonstrates how actors approach education through the market. Educational institutions package and sell programs to students/clients who are the consumers of educational services. Instructors are the labour force responsible for teaching and learning processes. As consumers students have expectations that the programs they consume will provide the credentials needed to acquire employment after graduation. On the other hand, when education is theorized as a gift-exchange economy, students shed their consumer identities to participate in reciprocal relationships with their instructors.

This is no easy task for many students, especially those who view education as building blocks to their future careers. Students are in a position where they are expected by faculty to be participants in both a commodity exchange and a gift exchange. The ambiguity of this relationship, which is both an economic and education relationship, creates a situation where students are willing to shift between subjective identities to ensure that their expectations for a return are met both economically and educationally. As a result, they participate in education programs as both a consumer and a participant in a gift exchange. This contradiction creates important challenges for the future of education relationships.

In the next chapter data collected from participants, faculty and students, involved in educational relationships within an international education program is presented. This case study presents an opportunity to explore the experiences of participants as they navigate through their experiences in the program. In particular, their participation in exchange relationships is highlighted. The data presented in the next chapter displays evidence that participants were involved to greater or lesser degree in the two types of exchange. Using their comments and observations from the classroom, I present the ways in which participants responded to their experiences with attention to the principles of gift-giving and commodity exchanges.

## Chapter 3

### **Experiencing the Gift & Perceiving the Commodity: A Presentation of Exchange Systems within Educational Relationships**

In this chapter, I present data to illustrate the ways in which research participants described their educational relationships as a gift exchange, a commodity exchange, or both. I rely on comments taken from interviews with participants along with my own observations to present narratives that contrast the two types of exchanges.

In order to present the data, this chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I focus on aspects of the gift exchange that are present in the educational relationships. I begin the section from the perspective of the faculty because it is the instructors who initiate an educational gift exchange with students. Then, I consider reciprocation of the gift from students to instructors.

The second section of this chapter concentrates on data about the economic relationship that exists between the college, the client, and the students. In particular I explore participants' discussions of the educational commodity and its affect on their educational relationships. This section is sub-divided into three parts. First, I present students' comments about how they perceive international education as a way to ameliorate their development. Next, I present a narrative of students' educational relationships using two examples, the selection process and the work placements. This narrative is followed by instructors' reflections on the commodity exchange, particularly how they discussed the influence of college-client relationship on their educational relationships.

#### **Gift-giving and Educational Relationships**

##### *The Gift*

In this section, I present examples of how faculty initiated a gift exchange with students. In this setting, the gift was in the form of knowledge and experience. This gift was given to students as three items. These items included knowledge about course

material, skill building experiences, and reflections from instructors' own personal experiences.

### 1. Course Curriculum - Values

The program was designed by faculty to guide students through an exploration of course material about leadership values outside of the UAE. Students were to use their new knowledge to build a personal leadership style. During the seven interviews I conducted with instructors, five instructors mentioned that they felt the best way for students to obtain a solid basis in leadership was to give them knowledge about the types of values that they may encounter in different societies. These instructors stated that they felt effective leadership training was based on understanding values from a variety of perspectives. For example, instructor #4 stated that the best way to educate students in this program was to give them knowledge about values "...because they would be working in an increasingly multicultural world, as leaders, interacting with people from different cultures, so it is good for them to be exposed to that."

Each instructor identified particular values for students to study. Values discussed in the classroom included "leadership," "trust," "communication," "participatory decision making," "teamwork," "responsibility," "diversity," "equality," "respect," "hard work," "punctuality," and "compassion." In addition, two instructors explained that they wanted students to have indirect exposure to values about "democracy," "transparency," "human rights," and "cosmopolitanism."

The degree to which instructors felt that students needed to have a strong grasp on different value systems varied from person to person. One instructor in particular made statements in support of embedding values within the course material. This instructor explained that in a leadership program it was imperative to introduce certain types of values to help students develop to become transformational leaders.

*Instructor # 2:* Everything that you do has an underlying value component to it. It doesn't have to be in a financial statement. Observe what they (*leaders*) do. It is about vision and how that is reflective of a value system... Leadership to me ought to be framed as transformational. That allows us to say from the current state to where they ought to be and that encompasses democratic principles, human rights

and human values.... We really want them (*students*) to be transformational so the key questions are ‘What do we need them to understand?’ and ‘What are the competencies they need to have?’ Otherwise, it is not a leadership program.

Students had an array of values to consider as they developed their ideas about leadership.

To ensure that values introduced in their courses would be useful for students in their roles as future leaders, instructors reflected on what they already knew about the students. Instructor #1 recalled the students she met during the interviews in the selection process:

Most of the people at the interview were passionate – they wanted to make a difference in the country and their government. That is often what we heard. We took that as our tagline. We asked, ‘What interests you in this particular program?’ There may be dozens of programs out there. They said, ‘We want to make a difference and bring that back to their government.’ They felt that their government had given them so much and they want to bring something back.

To further motivate the students, faculty adopted the slogan, “Make a Difference.” This slogan built on students’ pre-existing desires to become leaders and give something back to Emirati society. I often witnessed students in their classroom discussions with instructors frequently commenting that they wanted to give back to their country. When instructors asked students to reflect on how they saw themselves as leaders, students commented on the importance of giving their productive energy to their country. Individually, students explained that they wanted to focus their work on different areas of Emirati society that needed improvement. Some students wanted to work to improve gender relations in society. Another student commented that he wanted to work in areas that would challenge nepotism in government. Other students were more specific in addressing issues that affected the client’s organization, such as communication or efficiency.

Faculty introduced students to the types of values that would help them become effective leaders although it is the case that instructors varied in how they incorporated values into the material. Some courses were designed by instructors to include more overt content about different types of values. In one example, students participated in a full day

gender workshop to discuss how Emirati society was experienced by either a male or a female. The gender workshop challenged students to reflect on their own values, the values of their society, as well as make comparisons with other countries using the United Nation Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as guide. As a member of the United Nations, the UAE has agreed to achieve MDG targets by 2015. These targets include ending poverty and hunger, universal education, gender equality, child health, maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, environmental sustainability, and global partnerships. Students were asked to reflect on the MDG to recommend ways to improve gendered equality. After a discussion, the group made decisions about possible strategies that could be implemented in the UAE to meet the MDG targets. Students suggested that the government provide more social support programs for families and for women, especially protections for women in cases of domestic abuse.

The purpose of this exercise was to make students aware that as leaders they may come into contact with people who may have different value systems than their own. The message from instructors was that students did not have to accept the values that they discussed in class or learned in readings, but they were encouraged to reflect, understand and be able to communicate with people from outside of the UAE. The intention was to give students knowledge about different types of values that would improve their cultural communication skills.

*Instructor #2:* It was difficult to do all of that without being too preachy. So what I tried to do was put it under the umbrella of cosmopolitanism. You need to know this at least, how others operate, because you are going to interact with a set of people who live under a different set of rules with different expectations. So when I talked about openness, transparency and the merit principle, I wasn't suggesting you have to do this. I was really saying when negotiating a contract with Great Britain, you are going to need to have positive statements that meet a standard similar to them. They are going to require openness and disclosure. Even if you don't embrace it, you need to understand it, so that you know where people are coming from. So that you know that they don't disrespect you. It is simply the culture which they come from.

The message communicated from the faculty to students was consistent. In order to become effective leaders, students would need to have cultural knowledge about different

types of values so that they could communicate with people in an increasingly globalized world.

*Instructor #3:* In the very first course, we talked about values. Look at the values of the organization and at your and ask yourself if they are compatible. If they are unaligned, then you need to make a conscious or ethical decision about it. I think our role was to challenge that - being aware of the organization, others, yourself, values and make a judgment. We talked about international values and having had to be open to others.

The transfer of this type of knowledge became the basis for most of the subject matter covered during the program. The course topics were assigned by faculty under the guidance of the client's representative, but within each course instructors to design their curriculum to be in agreement with the objectives of the program.

The topic of values in a cross-cultural learning environment can be quite controversial and invokes a long history of colonial education where people in non-western societies are forced by educators to adapt to the value system of western cultures. The issue of teaching values was discussed by instructors in their interviews. Instructor reflected #3 on the issue of teaching values to non-western students in this way:

I think our students help define it as we worked through it. So I'm not sure that we did a really good job from the beginning trying to figure out where they wanted to be. I was conscious of the fact that our approach was so ethnocentric that it bothered me. The students based on their culture are so polite to get into a real good debate and get them to challenge our approach to things wasn't a natural thing to happen. I think we would have benefited from may be more of that. I mean forget the agenda, forget the curriculum. Let's talk about what you really think. So that may be a piece that was missing for me. Although if I had the opportunity to say this is what literature suggests that isn't to say that this going to work where you are going to be working. One piece would be – we were really on the move. They wanted to have this quickly. We were planning programs darn closed to when we were delivering them so we didn't have the benefit of standing back or reflecting. At the very beginning as part of the planning process we brought in people. Canadians who had worked there, Arab individuals from the Arab world, some of whom lived in the UAE for a while. We brought them to help us understand the culture and perspective. That was a pro-active thing that we did. How much that changed how we developed the curriculum? I don't know, but it put it in context and that was pretty important. This is what the literature suggests. There is an abundance of material here. Try it on and see if it fits. There

is all these different elements, test them out. This is what the work placements were for - to test these things out and the theory.

When asked about teaching values, other instructors explained how they approached this issue with students. Most instructors argued that it was important to have this information as future workers in the global economy, which is the sentiment represented in the comments from Instructor #2.

## 2. Skill Building Experiences

Faculty sought to give students opportunities for skill building experiences. Students had been selected for the program because they did not have extensive past work experiences. The client did not want students selected who had a lot of work history. Its representative lobbied to have candidates in the program that would be more familiar with new ways of working rather than old. Therefore, the program was designed to give students opportunities to obtain leadership experiences that they did not already have, either in the classroom, their work placements, or in the community.

First, instructors focused on building students' skills by creating leadership experiences in the classroom. Students were placed into situations where they would be positioned as team leaders. As leaders, individuals were responsible for managing the tasks of their fellow students. Each week students were responsible for projects that required work with partners or in groups. In this way, students had opportunities to practice their communication skills, presentation skills, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork with other members of the cohort. Faculty continually encouraged students who were strong in certain areas to coach other members of the cohort. Students were given multiple opportunities to practice their leadership skills in the classroom.

The faculty wanted students to have leadership experiences in international settings. The program required students to live outside of the UAE for an extended period of time during their coursework. This aspect of the program exposed students to the many of the challenges of living in a different society. In addition, students were to gain practical experiences in their placements while learning about the organizational culture

of a workplace in a different country. Faculty searched to find students work placements in sites where their skills would be challenged. Students returned to the classroom after the placements and shared the insights they gained from working abroad.

Along with the work term at an international placement, faculty also wanted students to participate within the local community. In one exercise in particular, an instructor assigned students a project where they conducted interviews with community leaders. Afterwards, students presented their subject's personal leadership style to the class. One group of students interviewed the operator of a local soup kitchen. The students talked about how inspirational an experience it was to speak with this person about his career. The students expressed their gratitude for this opportunity because they met someone who they credited as being a motivational leader. They explained that this assignment taught them many things about leadership, such "perseverance," "selflessness," and "community spirit." These were lessons students felt they could incorporate into their own leadership styles.

A particular area that instructors worked to build in students' leadership qualities was their communication skills. Faculty identified communication early in the program as an area where they could offer students assistance. There was a sentiment among several of the instructors that students needed to be more open to receiving feedback. The students also needed more practice in giving feedback. Giving and receiving feedback assessments became a topic that instructors used to develop students' communication skills.

Instructors worked to give students detailed feedback assessments about their assignments as well as their performances in class. It was challenge for instructors to give students feedback. At times, students would object to their grades or the comments in their feedback assessments. However, four instructors stated that the feedback process, despite its challenges, was helpful to building communication skills among the students. For example, instructor #1 recalled an instance where students learned from the feedback process:

I gave them a lot of feedback on their papers. They are never going to learn if you don't provide the feedback... I believe it was a rigorous process for their tests, and homework assignments... They like to negotiate their grades. So they had a case study to do. I marked their studies, but their marks get posted before they get their case study back. I had a call from one of the leaders. They had their mark from the case study and they weren't very happy. I said, 'Okay, but have you picked up your hardcopy.' He said, 'No.' I said, 'Pick up your hardcopy first.' He called me back. He said he wanted to apologize. 'We deserve the mark.' He didn't challenge it. He didn't know until they got the document back – where did I go wrong, why did I get the grade. Once they got the feedback they realized the grade was fair for the work.

The discussion about feedback was a common thread that emerged throughout the course.

*Instructor #3:* That was interesting because we are not used to giving anything other than a pass/fail. This group was marked and every point matter to them... Literally, I was, at one point, when I turned the corner I thought that someone would be waiting for me around the corner. That was the way it was for weeks until we had to start to deal with that. They are very motivated by that sort of reward system. We had to understand what their roots were and the nature of the education system that they came from because they were conditioned that is where the motivation was the marks. Verbal feedback is not a part of their culture. We quickly learned that coaching things in a very positive frame was the only way we were going to have meaningful open communication. Giving negative feedback is not part of their culture nor is asking people to compliment themselves. That was something we had to come to appreciate. So here is your chance now tell me what you have done well. That was hard to get. You are trying to help, but you are going against the grain of their culture... So you come at it from a different angle and say, 'If I was to ask your teammates about what they thought your best qualities were, what do you think they would say?' Then we were starting to get somewhere.

Instructors found that if students had more opportunities to practice with their communication skills, they may learn to accept and give criticisms more constructively. Communication was an area where faculty worked closely with students to encourage students to develop a new set of skills.

### 3. Stories from Personal Experiences

A third item that faculty gave to students was their own personal experiences. All of the instructors embedded stories about their personal experiences within their classroom lectures or discussions. These stories were used to highlight certain points with relevant life experiences. The types of stories that instructors told varied depending on

the topic at the moment. An instructor might describe their professional experiences, such as learning the organizational culture at a new workplace, or at other times, talking more about more their personal experiences. These stories were presented to students with the intention that they remember instructors' experiences as a reference point for understanding course material.

I present two examples of instructors using storytelling about their own experiences as an educational tool. In the first example, an instructor told a story that drew from both his professional and personal life. In this story the instructor highlighted two lessons, the importance of a collegial attitude in the workplace and not letting workplace conflicts interfere with personal relationships. The instructor began the story by telling students about his experiences working on a board at an educational institution. The board was tasked with making decisions that informed the direction of the institution. The instructor explained to students that not all decisions could be reached without dissent. Often there was debate about the types of decisions that needed to be made. The instructor described a trend he noticed where another board member seemed to be in opposition to the decisions that he would like the board to make. Time and again, the instructor explained, he and the other board member would be in situations where they would debate to influence the decision making process. Their professional relationship seemed to draw them together into conflict. However, their personal relationship was different. The instructor recalled how he would have occasional unexpected encounters with the same board member outside of their meetings. He used the example of the grocery store as one place he could unexpectedly encounter his colleague. The instructor remarked that their encounters were always pleasant because they left their conflicts behind in the boardroom after their meetings. The instructor explained that it was important for their relationship, both professional and personal, to respect each other's contrary opinion so that they could continue to work together with respect. By respecting each other's opinion, despite their differences, they were able to build a cordial personal relationship as well.

In a second example, an instructor provides a short story about her own experiences with cultural contact. In this example, the instructor relates her own

experiences directly to course material. As an exercise, students read a short story to identify a mystery group of people. The story is based on a fictionalized encounter between an anthropologist and a society who are referred to as the Snaidanacs. As it turns out, the Snaidanacs are really Canadians. Aspects of Canadian daily life are exoticized in the story to mask recognizable practices to someone who might be familiar with the culture. The story represents what most Canadians would recognize as getting up in the morning and making a visit to the bathroom to wash. The purpose of the exercise was to give students some practice with cultural translation.

After a brief discussion about how to translate the rituals in the story, the instructor reinforced lessons from exercise with a brief story from her personal life. The instructor tells students that she worked closely with international students during her own time as a university student. This experience allowed her to not only learn about different cultures, but also reflect on her own. She explains that there were students who initially had difficulty making a transition to Canadian society. She noted that practices, such as brushing one's teeth, seemed so different when they were described by someone from another culture. The instructor explained that her experiences reminded her of the challenges of moving from one culture to another. The instructor tied the earlier exercise to her personal story as means to build a lesson about cultural relativism. Finally, students were asked to brainstorm areas of Emirati culture that may seem unusual to someone unfamiliar with their society.

### *The Gift Return*

Students are in a position to reciprocate the initial gift of knowledge from faculty. In this program, students were able to reciprocate in two ways. The first way students could reciprocate was through their own work. Students offered appreciation for the work undertaken by the faculty. Student #9 reflected on her education relationships with the following comments:

Each one (*instructor*) has a different communication. It is good. I think it is a normal relationship. There is no differences. The way of education is different. I think it is not just about teaching and grading activities. It is like training for a job. So they should make sure that each one of us is successful, pass the requirements,

and ready to work in the (*client's organization*). They are making sure that each one has been developed and improved. They are looking for the weakness, the strengths. They are always trying to develop the weaknesses and if there is any conflict they always try to solve it within the group...

Student #2 acknowledged the contributions of faculty:

We have a good relationship. Same respect, same values. I have a value – respect others values for them to respect mine. They have their own way and I really respect them because they are doing hard work. I appreciate their work. Always a good relationship since phase one. They get to know me more. My relationship is very good.

Comments, such as these, are representative of students' awareness for instructors' difficult work in building educational relationships. These students recognize instructors' hard work. The comments reflect students' willingness to accept the gift of knowledge from instructors.

In response to the work conducted by faculty, students had many opportunities to reciprocate. Students could choose to participate in classroom discussions. They also were responsible for in-class presentations and written assignments. I had many opportunities to observe students as they completed their assignments in the classroom. In the classroom, students worked diligently to complete their tasks. The small size of the cohort meant that there was a heightened responsibility on students to participate. Students reflected on the material to provide thoughtful responses in their group discussions.

The best example of students' work comes from the many presentations that students gave in class almost every week. Students had to work quickly to formulate creative presentations about any number of different topics. The creativity expressed during these presentations reflected the degree to which students were able to respond to course material. Each week students created presentations that were uniquely engaging. Students demonstrated their comprehension for a topic while including elements of theatre and humor to maintain the interest of the audience.

Instructors recognized when students had reciprocated. They remembered particular instances where students had demonstrated that they have engaged in their work thoughtfully. Instructors provided examples of these moments in their interviews:

*Instructor #5:* I can remember specifically an assignment where it was (*a student*) who made a very insightful observation that nobody else had seen in her paper. So it wasn't long, but it was well-written and she got a good mark. Somebody like (*student*), who you would expect a fair bit reflection because he has a lot of background, his paper had no thought in it. So, personally, I mark what I get and what I'm looking for is creativity, insights, self-reflection.

We saw leadership of some who would coach or encourage others. Excellent. We saw leadership in terms of some who would express creative and challenging ideas and sometimes get shot down for them.

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*Instructor #4:* My favorite students were those that should not have been accepted. (*Names a student*) – Real star. They were willing to take feedback. Listen. Work with us. They paraphrased and considered others point of view. Such growth. (*Student*) worked hard. I admire good character. (*Student*) and (*student*) impressed the heck out of me around comments on assimilation. Now those four or five would not have been accepted into the original program because their English language was so low. In terms of their leadership, the qualities, these are things that impressed me. (*Student*) was another guy who wouldn't have been accepted. While the others who's English was better were good, they were not the stars for me. I'm in awe. Brilliant young people.

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*Instructor #2:* I was surprised - one student wanted to deal with the issue of gender and inequality. Another talked about nepotism and corruption. The last two I didn't address directly. It was heartening because it came out in the papers.

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*Instructor #1:* I've had a wonderful experience. I cannot say that I've had a bad experience in that classroom. I think in part it is the way they treated me. They treated me with a lot of respect. I loved the experience. We had healthy debates in our discussions. I just feel fortunate that my experience throughout the program was positive. A fantastic experience.

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The second way in which students reciprocated with faculty was through the knowledge they shared about the UAE. Given the intercultural component to the

educational relationships, students were positioned, at times, as the experts about how the course material would apply to Emirati society. One instructor described her eagerness to participate in the program as it was an opportunity to learn from the students. Instructor #3 expressed the following sentiment about her participation in the program:

Even if I was on the fringe I would have wanted to be in there because it is a fabulous learning opportunity. The intercultural aspect of this was so intriguing. Something I was interested in. When I was in university I had to do exchanges myself. So the curiosity of adapting to culture, different customs and traditions is just fascinating to me. This was a part of the world I didn't know much about or the culture. A learning experience definitely.

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As the first cohort, students offered their perspectives on how the course could be further developed. They were the first students to experience the program. Their input provided insights into how faculty could improve their courses.

*Instructor #5:* We were contracted on paper to do four cohorts. Part of the reason for getting all that feedback was to improve the curriculum for cohorts two to four. In terms of the feedback impacting the curriculum as we went along, it did somewhat. Certainly from phase one, we got feedback about the assignments and the work being too heavy. That impacted what we did in phases two and three because we had the time to make changes. The other thing we did – courses were often eight days or two weeks with a break. Instructors who were new had time to make revisions after they got to know their students.

Another instructor remarked about the importance of considering the formal feedback given by students in their course evaluations. Instructor #1 explained that in her preparations she would: “Go back and look the comments they made from their evaluations on how this could improved. Certainly take that into respect when I design the curriculum for the next cohort. What could I do differently?” Instructor #3 approached students input in this way:

I think a lot of it was after the fact in really talking to the students and trying to get our bearings. The country is just so new and the exponential change, I mean, they are trying to figure it out on a daily basis and how to navigate their growth with the senior people not having the international experience.

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Students did not always knowingly contribute to the direction of the program. Faculty frequently asked for students to give their perspectives on the material. These types of questions were designed to not only motivate students to reflect, but also to give instructors insights into how students were responding in case any changes to the curriculum needed to be addressed. Often responses from students would stimulate discussions about the UAE. In these moments, students could tell instructors their own personal experiences about their personal background, their workplaces, their schools, or other topics, such as shopping or etiquette.

One particular project that developed into learning experience for the faculty was one in which students were asked to conduct interviews with friends and family in the UAE. Students were to ask members of three generations of Emiratis to rank the values that they held to be important. This project took a month to complete as students conducted their interviews. Their data was compiled into a presentation. The presentation was attended by not only students and their current course instructor, but also by faculty who were not scheduled to teach in that week. The instructors who attended were intrigued by the information that the students had collected about the Emirati value system. This information offered instructors further insights into the values of Emirati society, which they could reflect on in their preparations for later courses.

Instructors also learned by making observations about students' interactions with one another. They were able to learn what parts of the curriculum worked and what parts needed to be re-emphasized for students. For example, instructor #3 recalled occasions when she had used students' experiences in the program to provide teachable moments for the cohort:

Actually, there were a few times that I did this – just stopped and one of them was actually in the program. (*Another instructor*) and I did the very first course. We had a crisis and we just stopped things. There was so much tension in the group and there were people involved in the program that you never met. Back biting. Intolerance between the participants. It was palpable. We just stopped things. Did we change the curriculum to deal with dynamic issues? Yes. Did we do that to change the content of the program? Well, yeah.

There were a...during the second work placement they revolted. They did not do any of the assignments. There was collusion. Can I guarantee that? From my observation there was collusion. (*Another instructor*) and I dealt with that. We stopped things again and we used that as an opportunity to discuss feedback. Is saying nothing an option? Yes. Is communicating the difficulty an option to improve the situation? What are the outcomes of both? Now let's look at the work placement. What happened? So we tried to use it to means to get on track.

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In these sections, I have emphasized key elements of the gift exchange in an educational setting using data collected in the field. These examples will be further discussed in chapter four.

## **Credential Consumption and Educational Relationships**

### *Fetishizing International Education*

A central motivation behind students' decisions to participate in the program was the opportunity to obtain a credential that would allow them to work in the client's organization. All of the students stated that the client had a strong reputation as a prestigious organization in Abu Dhabi. The students explained that the client had a "good name," and was "well-respected" (Student #10, Student #2). All students explained that they were hopeful that employment with the client would improve their prospective positions as future leaders both within its organization and in the UAE.

This sentiment is evident in the responses to my questions about why students choose to enroll in this leadership program. Student #9 replied to my query that she felt strongly that she had ideas to contribute as leader:

My opinion is that I can be a leader. I always like to take charge. I would like to be a leader in my country. I would like to make changes and differences because I have a lot of ideas. When I see on TV or I work in government or private sectors back home I feel that I can do better than this. I feel that I want to my country to be one of the best countries in the world.

Many students made similar comments about their desire to become future leaders in their country. Student #1 explained that the program matched her "ambition" and "vision" about her abilities as a leader. Student #7 commented that the program would

allow him “to practice leadership and come back (*to the UAE*) to fill a leadership position.” All students made similar types of comments in their descriptions of the reasons for applying for a position in the program.

Students’ decisions were influenced by the fact that program was facilitated by faculty at a college in another country. Students were motivated by their own perceptions of how international education is viewed by potential employers. Student #10 explained that an international education is an asset because it is “more prestigious to have a degree from a country like Britain, Canada or the US.” Student #4 said that she had decided to enter the program because people who have international experiences are more attractive to employers:

International students are valued in the workplace because of the quality of the studies abroad. This program should help me to understand the people in my own country. It will improve my reputation as future employee. It is an opportunity to take high level positions because I studied at a very good university. I will have training about good information and quality education.

Students #2 offered the most telling example of how students predicted their educational experiences would be interpreted by others at home. He explained that graduation from an international program was demonstrative of personal growth:

Outside education is very heavy in our country. Compared to our university, they do have a good reputation. If you said I have a degree from Australia or UAE, the education is the same, but you know you have been outside. You have faced different culture. You cope with the culture. You faced a lot of challenges than the person who is studied there (*in the UAE*), who did not face the same as you did. You depend on yourself if you face the problem. If I was home, all will jump to help me. If I have a problem here, no one knows me, so you have to build relationships with people. You have to be a good communicator with people to understand. You have to figure out a way in case something happens.

These students’ comments reflect a view of international education that represents a growth experience that sets them apart from their peers.

### *The Education Commodity - Students and their Educational Relationships*

Three topics were illustrative of examples where students highlighted the commodity aspects of their relationship with the college. The topics that drew these types

of responses were the selection of students, grading assessments, and the work terms. In the space below I present narrative examples supported by students' and instructors' comments about the commodification of education relationships in the context of their experiences in the program. I present comments about the selection process and grading assessments together because these two topics were directly related to each other in the comments by participants.

### 1. The Selection Process & Grading Assessments

The outcome from the student selection process created a number of challenges for both faculty and students. The selection process did not proceed as originally planned by the faculty. The faculty, in collaboration with the client, set admission standards for the program. Instructors vetted the pool of applicants. Then, instructors reduced the number of applicants to candidates who would be interviewed for a position in the program. After the interview process, instructors gave the client lists of students that the college recommended for acceptance into the program. The client had the final decisions about which students would be admitted.

A problem arose when the client's list of candidates did not match with the college's list. Instead, the cohort of students accepted into the program constituted a mixed cohort of students selected by both the college and the client. This arrangement created a considerable dilemma for everyone involved in the program. The cohort who entered into the program constituted a group of students who were in possession of a range of skills, abilities, and past experiences.

It was evident to instructors from the outset that members of the cohort possessed vastly disparate levels of English language comprehension. Language became a challenge that was accommodated to ensure that all students would be able to understand the material and learn during their time in the classroom. Instructor #5 recalled her early impressions of students' grasp of English:

In the beginning language was a big barrier. Initially we wanted everybody to be at a consistent level of English – level 5. (*A local language institute*) advised us on that whole part, but we ended up having a class where there are a couple of

students who can communicate as well as you and I can, and four students who can barely say, 'How are you?', and then some students in the middle. Some students had fairly good spoken English and poor writing skills and our assignments were based on writing. So we had to adjust our expectations in the beginning in terms of how much can actually be handled in the curriculum.

Instructors re-assessed the requirements for assignments in order to meet students' learning needs. Instructor #2 explained how he significantly adjusted his expectations for students due to the language constraints:

I cut back on the readings and the expectations. In my first course, it was pretty clear it wasn't working. In the second course, there was hardly any readings, didn't use the internet, and it was mostly class work. They are, in terms of this program, they are an oral society. What are we going to do? Send them home? Tell them they don't have the requisite skills? It would be nice to be able to do 5000 word research papers at a credible quality, but that ain't going to happen. So let's live with it and get on with it and recognize that something happened at the beginning that didn't work.

The outcome of the selection process motivated instructors to adjust what they included in course curriculum and assessment standards. Instructors continually refined their curriculum to overcome difficulties caused by the variance in language skills.

Students also noticed that English language competencies varied within the group. Students questioned how the cohort arrived at a composition of students with very high and very low levels of English comprehension. They expressed their belief that the language variance provided grounds to challenge instructors over the grading rubric. All students remarked in their interviews that language directly affected their experiences in the program. While some students explained that their language skills did improve during the program, other students were critical of how the cohort's composition affected their learning. Student #3 explained his position as such:

We don't know how people were selected. We know the process, but there is a huge difference in skills. When we enter a course, we expect something out of this course, but you learn nothing because some people are up here (*gestures with a raised hand in the air*) and other people are down there (*gestures with the same hand lower in the air*). I expect to learn advance but someone else will drag you down. Now the teachers change the objective so that the people who are there (raises his hand again), they don't learn anything.

Students who felt they had stronger English language skills expressed their sentiments that a problem with the grading scale existed. These students explained that they should be rewarded with higher grades for their work more often than students who struggled with spoken and written English.

Students used this phrase with some instructors, “We know where we sit” (Instructor #5). This phrase was used by students to make a statement about how students compared their own abilities with other members of their cohort. Instructor #5 describes an encounter with a student who used the phrase:

*(A student)* said, ‘We know where we sit.’ Now we would say, ‘We know where we stand,’ but he said, ‘We know where we sit.’ And he was objecting to the marks... I interpreted that to mean that if somebody gets a better mark, there is favoritism going on.

With this phrase, “We know where we sit,” students expressed to instructors their belief that it was unlikely students who struggled with English could complete their work with the same quality. Unsatisfied with their marks, students questioned the integrity of the instructors, the program, and the college.

Seven students questioned whether the college awarded grades to pass more students as a means to protect their contractual relationship with the client. The college had established a 70% pass mark for the courses. Students expressed their belief that grading was biased to raise all students’ marks over the 70% pass mark threshold. They contended that some students were unfairly assessed to artificially inflate marks. These students argued that a high pass rate would likely generate approval for the college from the client. They reached the conclusion that a successful program would lead to more cohorts sent from the UAE. There was an assumption among the students that this arrangement could lead to more revenue for the college. Student #10 explained how he viewed the influence of client-college relationship on the educational relationships:

Sometimes involving grades in a training program could affect the integrity of the program. They (*faculty*) focus on grades rather than progress. If you know that, then say forget about the grades and see the writing to learn weaknesses and develop them. If you are really concerned about the program then there is no other way to do this to improve the quality of the students. The other side, the school is

responsible for selecting people. From politics point of view, the school will have to say that they selected the right people and the grades will have to reflect this. They may not give low grades. If I get low grades, then they help me to re-submit. On the school side, they want the contract to work and here is where there is struggle because it is not pure education or training. Other things interfere – interests, integrity, emotions – I’m talking about teacher-student emotions, maybe, relationships.

You are given a sheet of paper with instructions about to approach them - how you are to appeal and all this stuff. Are we in the Middle Ages? You will react. I think I am here to learn leadership and management and the people who are running this whole thing are way missing the point. It’s just sometimes I am angry. I was taken from my job, resigned, to join this opportunity. Not because I want to conflict with people. There is dignity and respect. Whatever mistakes were done it is not the students’ fault but the management’s fault. When someone complains you (*faculty*) change the whole criteria. The grading for the work term is so subjective. You don’t need a grade for this, but people were selected in the wrong ways. I still want to know the marks for the English exam and I get no answer because I think there is something wrong. The school had the upper hand. They were responsible for the selection. The contract was signed with someone who expected them to do it the right way and now the consequences of this are right here. We suffered. I suffered. Others suffered. Weeks have gone and I have learned nothing because they changed the criteria because someone does not understand. I want to learn as well.

Students #10 based his conclusions on his suspicions about the political and economic motivations of the college. Another student used an example from her own experience to demonstrate how she thought the relationship between the college and the client had intervened into her educational relationship with instructors.

Student #12 tells a story about an assessment meeting with instructors. The meeting was attended by the student and two instructors from the college. During the meeting the instructors provided the student with feedback about her participation in class and the quality of her coursework over a phase of the program. Student #12 recalled how this encounter caused her to question her trust in the educational relationships:

We faced many challenges with the faculty. There was a real bias. We can see the bias and the way they (*faculty*) deal with and the way they encourage participation in the class. We can feel it in many ways. In phase two when we had a feedback session, I talked to the faculty and I told them that there is something wrong with the grading system and it is not fair. I told them that I don’t agree with the marks and I don’t care about the marks because the marks are not really fair. I said,

‘Actually, I don’t care about the report or the grades because nothing here represents me.’ They said, ‘We cannot change anything but you have to sign that you agree with it.’ I wouldn’t sign because I don’t agree with it. I told them, ‘You know what? You can send it to the (*client*), but I will discuss it with the (*client*) when I go back there.’ They told me that, ‘You don’t have to discuss it. It is just a report and nothing will happen about it.’ I told them, ‘Okay, I don’t care and you can just send it.’

After a few minutes I got a call. I had gone to the apartments. They told me, ‘Okay, you can come back.’ I went there and they had changed my report. They took out the sentence that said that my performance was getting low. I told them that I think that the (*client*) has a right to know that my performance is low because it is not fair not to mention it. They said, ‘No, we recognize that you were participating, and you did quite well in this phase. Your performance was good.’ So because of one comment that I said the report was changed.

From that day I lose trust in them because they keep telling us things and then come and they contradict themselves. After this situation it was I don’t care about it. I’m just here to learn and gain knowledge because that is what we are here for. Not for the grades. Not for anything else. My main mission is to get the knowledge to benefit myself and my country. I don’t care about the grades because they won’t make me feel any better. I know my performance and this is fine with me.

Student #12 did not consider a possibility that instructors could re-evaluate her assessment fairly to her credit. Instead, through this story, student #12 raises an implication that instructors re-assessed her mark to protect the relationship between the college and the client. The discussion about grading assessments was an area where students questioned their educational relationship with college. The students represented in the above examples suggested that the economic relationship between the college and the client factored significantly into their education relationships.

## 2. Work Placements

Events prior to and after the work placements assignments were also discussed by students with consideration for the college-client relationship. Students were assigned two work placements during the program. The purpose of work placements was to give students opportunities to observe and practice with the knowledge they had learned in the program. The goal was to provide students work experiences while still making the experiences educational. Work terms were scheduled in between each of the first two

phases of the program. For the first work placement students were assigned to organizations in the UAE. For the second work placement students were assigned to an international organization.

There were significant obstacles to obtaining international work placements for the students. Two instructors, guided by advice from the client, were in charge of finding placements for the students. Instructors cited a number of reasons that contributed to making the process more challenging. The reasons included competition among many different organizations to find students work placements, a recent downturn in the global economy that had made organizations reluctant to accept the students, a lack of support from the client, and difficulties in placing students who had limited English skills with organizations where fluent English would be a requirement. Instructor #5 described the situation: “We had come to the realization of how difficult it was going to be to find placements for them because their English is poor. There are Harvard University students, right now, out there looking for placements. We couldn’t get them (*students*) to come to class on time.” Instructor #4 made a similar comment about the search for work placements: “It is not easy to phone up a company and say can you take a person on from another culture who cannot necessarily speak English. It was dead end after dead end.” This issue was resolved as instructors were able to eventually find work terms for students.

During the search process the instructors had made a decision to include two students with the intention of having students contribute to the process. Instructors asked students to nominate two people who could serve as representatives for the cohort. The representatives from the cohort met with the instructors who were involved with the search process. The instructors explained their difficulties to the student representatives. Despite reaching out to students, many were frustrated with how long it took to receive their placements. The two instructors in charge of finding the placements had hoped that by including students in the process, those who were frustrated would understand how difficult it was to find their placements.

A further problem arose when the client contacted the college about an email it had received from a student. In the email, the student detailed the challenges that had been discussed during the meeting between instructors and student representatives. The student included their views of criticisms of the client that had allegedly been made by instructors. As a result, the client asked the college to remove the students from the process. The letter upset an instructor who brought the issue to the attention of all of the students after they had returned from their placements.

Three students described this confrontation between an instructor and the cohort that occurred as a result of letter sent to the client. The confrontation took place during class time when an instructor challenged students about the contents of the letter. The students remarked that the confrontation impacted how they viewed the program and their relationship with faculty at the college. Below, I provide three descriptions of this encounter in the students' own words along with their responses to this incident.

*Student #7:* I remember going to the work placement. They (*instructors*) told us to make a committee of the students and we're going to talk to some international organizations and we are going to find an internship inside these organizations. We came up with a committee of students. After that (*an instructor*) of the college, he came to us and he made all these comments. The disappointment for us and he told us, 'The more you stay here, the more you are going to pay. If you are not happy then just leave to your own country.' I don't think that it is something nice to say to someone who doesn't belong to this society.

I don't know. It was a shock for us. We didn't know why he came. He told us there is a letter. He said that the letter destroyed their relationship with the (*client*) and that they might cancel the program. Did he have to generalize between all of the students? No. We could talk to each one privately to find out who sent it. Ask them why send it. If I believe in myself that I didn't do it, then so what?

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*Student #12:* There was a situation. He (*an instructor*) came and he was angry, yelling at us. He said, 'Anyone who is not happy, you can go back home. Go back to your own country if you are not happy.' He was threatening us. He said, 'The more you stay, the more that you pay.' He said many things that that are unrespectful. We don't expect those words from an academic person. To say, 'If you are not happy, go back to your own country.' It is not a professional way to deal with students. It was all of the class felt insulted. We were all discouraged by his words.

The role of the (*client*) and the role of (*the college*) should be very clear to the students. We don't know to who we have to talk – the college or the (*client*). Sometimes we can't...we don't know. Some issues were not really clear. This is very important. It must be clear.

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*Student # 10:* All of a sudden they (*faculty*) came to us and they told us that there was a group of students who took a letter to the (*client*) complaining about the school here. We don't know if a letter was sent. They couldn't prove anything. They did not have any letter. We don't know if it was made up. They just claimed someone sent the message. (*An instructor*) came in and he said, 'If you do not like it you can go back home. As simple as that.

I think that I need a long break to think about this whole thing and one year and a half and what I have gone through. It is only one year and a half but it is doubled. To understand the people, what are they thinking, and who do they blame it on. I was talking to a faculty member one time and I asked, 'Who are your clients?' The faculty member said, 'The (*client*). They are who pay the bill.' I said, 'No. Your customers are not the ones who are paying the bills. Your customers are the ones who you are delivering your services to.' So if I am happy – not free grades – then we can give better feedback about the university. Then the business can still be running, but you cannot step on my neck and expect me to be happy and expect that they will send more people. I am so much confused about this whole thing.

I like to think of (*the college*) as an educational institute. It is not a company. It is not a business. So if this program was treated that way from the beginning of the course we will have ten cohorts, but it is not how it was handled. Maybe because it (*the program*) is new. Maybe you should consult with someone outside. You don't decide to do everything yourself like someone who designed the program. The school will take the turn of teaching and one person does everything. Be honest. Be fair. There is integrity in everything. Otherwise, you harm your reputation. I wish we treated as pure students, not as a friend or a guest. Teachers need to concentrate on those who are looking about improvement. When you give people confidence about themselves, they will not be looking for opponents.

Student #3 talked about how trust in their educational relationships was affected by these situations. He stated that "...the trust relationship is broken between students and the *college*." Student #10's echoed those remarks: "I trusted them with the outcome I was told I would have and really I am disappointed. Too many conflicts. Too much complaining."

Three students, who expressed frustration about the program, talked about the investments that they had made by enrolling in terms of a time commitment. Student #3 commented that he was concerned that if he did not receive a desired employment outcome from the program, he would lose status comparatively with other people his age:

One year and a half is very long time. Eight months is more reasonable. Many opportunities when we left behind. We sacrificed to come to this program and now you see colleagues (at home) getting higher positions. You wonder what you learned. The colleague will be higher even though you are taking leadership courses.

Student #6 also reflected on the time investment required for the program: “For the past year and half we missed our lives because we didn’t know what to do or plan.” These students compared their time investment with their assessments of their experiences in the program.

#### *The Education Commodity - Faculty and their Educational Relationships*

During their interviews, instructors expressed two perspectives about the exchange relationship between the college and the client. In this section, I present instructors perspectives on this topic with support from comments made by instructors during their interview sessions. One perspective shared by instructors about the commodity relationship recognizes the college as a business. Another perspective is that the commodity relationship can, at times, interfere with the education relationships between instructors and students.

When asked about the background of the program, instructors would often provide similar types of responses. They offered an acknowledgement that the program was the product of a contractual arrangement between the college and client. The content was designed by faculty at the college in consultation with a representative from the client. Instructor #5 explained the origins of the program:

In 2007, a simple email was sent to someone else on campus from (*a representative of the client*). He was looking for some negotiation training. Because I do that it came to me. Then it morphed and (*the representative*) came here in July 2007. At that time, it had become a leadership development program. (*The representative*) and (*an administrator*) worked out a contract. I was involved

a little bit. We put together a program. It happened very quickly as these things tend to do when clients come to us.

Other instructors made shorter references to the contractual relationship, such as “We were contracted to teach four cohorts” (Instructor #3). Two instructors, who participated in the proposal process, referred most often to the college’s relationship to the client. These instructors had more frequent encounters with representatives from the client than other instructors.

Instructors referred to the relationship with the client when they talked about how they would prepare for their courses. The parameters for the program, such as what types of topics to teach, developed through negotiation between the college and client. For example, instructor #1 described how the relationship with client influenced her preparations:

The goal of the program was collaboration between the (*client*) and the college. To meet the goals, not only from the college’s perspective – academic goals, but also to meet the goals of the (*client*) in terms of preparing young people to be new leaders in the organization. So we looked at goals of the client and then we looked at our own goals to provide a sound academic environment and curriculum. We looked at resources in the area leadership in terms of the overall goals. As facilitators, we had to bring the level down to course content. It was twofold. Meeting the goals of the Ministry and as a college it met the academic requirements...

Another instructor described her preparations as “...trying to make the right pedagogical decisions about design in the best interests of these stakeholders, who were going to hold you to task at the end...” (Instructor #3). Some instructors commented that the client did not provide much input into their course preparations. Instructor #2 describes his experience in this way:

I was basically told about what the headings would be, but within that I had a high degree of latitude about what to put in it... I had a great degree of control. The only thing that I had to do was probably not be too provocative in identifying those learning points. Though I might talk about democratic principles, I wouldn’t put that in an outline in contact with the UAE.

Instructor #1 had a similar experience:

Adjustments were made to incorporate the needs assessment due to feedback from the (*client*) via (*its representative*). Certainly information about the needs. But as an instructor, I would say, there was nothing particular other than to give the students a good grounding in leadership. That was the purpose of this. In terms of specific content, there was nothing. We had discussions among ourselves about the context, ‘What do we know about their situation?’ and ‘What the priorities are?’ As you would with any group. ‘What is relevant to them?’, ‘What is their background?’, ‘What do they already have a good handle on?’ ‘What is going to be most helpful?’ Within that, I felt free to be developing the leadership courses as appropriate.

These comments display instructors’ awareness for the importance of working to achieve the client’s needs whether the input from the client was necessary or not.

On occasions, a representative from the client would be present at the college to evaluate the students in the classroom. During these visits everyone in the room was aware of the presence of the client. There would be lots of discussion whenever the representative was to be on site. The faculty would inform students that he would be likely stopping in to visit the class for their presentations or that he was at the college to interview students. Students asked each other if they had the chance to speak with him in anticipation of his visit. These visits were important opportunities for the representative to assess the program, in particular how students responded to the curriculum while in the classroom.

The faculty negotiated a complex relationship between the college, the client, and the students. Three instructors who discussed the relationships between the three actors sketched out a hierarchal power dynamic that positioned the client at the top with the most power, the college in the second position, and the students third. Instructor #3 sketched the dynamic in a grid placing each actor in relation to the others. She stated, “There was the college and here was the client, here was the (*client’s representatives*), and here was our students. These are the primary stakeholders. (*The client*) was in control.” Her remarks were echoed by instructor #4: “In my mind, (*the client*) is our client. They have the right of decision making. If they say do this, we do this. They’re paying the bill. Third on the power totem pole would be the students and they would have to live with it.”

Instructors commented that the relationships between the actors did not always seem to function predictably. Many instructors expressed a sentiment that the economic relationship, in some ways, interfered with their education relationships. Instructors recalled stories where the interactions between the three types of actors directly affected their educational relationships. Many of these comments related directly to the language issues created by the selection process and I will not re-state earlier comments again in this space, but they are relevant to this topic. In addition, instructors offered these further reflections on their education relationships.

*Instructor #4:* ...I had thought going hard on cultural differences there and in Canada and learning about the Myers-Briggs (*model*) early on so they can learn about themselves. All that had been thought of, but when (*the client*) made the decision to have that mixed competency group it was really hard to do the Myers-Briggs because the comprehension level was really low with two-thirds of the group and we couldn't do it with Myers-Briggs. Instead, we did it with learning styles. So there whole conversation could have taken place about how to adjust culturally and about team dynamics that was just constrained by the language competency issue. In an ideal world things would have gone very differently if they had or the entire group had a higher level of ability to communicate, comprehend, and interact in that language. Potentially one small thing decided by whoever in (*the client's organization*), having different levels of English put a crick in the college's level to support people in coming to another culture, and being isolated and connecting them to other students.

There was difficulty finding work placement because the (*client*) had vetoed certain companies, and they weren't clear. So the college says we are not getting support, so why don't you (*students*) figure it out with the (*client*). This is too frustrating to get the go aheads. Several work placements fell flat and the students did not know that it was the (*client*) that had set those up, so the college wore that and when I tried to explain. They (*students*) were upset that I tried say that it was (*the client*), some people were angry with me. I had to back off.

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*Instructor #3:* I think it is really important to understand the different stakeholders. The primary driver was (*the client*). However, the person doing the communicating was a non-national. Therefore, we were filtering everything for the needs of the program through this person. We had to put our trust in this individual that we were addressing the needs of what (*the client*) indicated and wanted. There were a lot if filters between. We had to learn to appreciate that over time, which made it really complicated at times. For me, because of the integrity of the program, and for my colleagues who are used to finding out what the gap is and addressing the need, there is a – this is a difficult shift because we had one

person who was communicating and it was questionable, at times, that we were definitely getting what we needed to make the best decision or do the best job we could to satisfy their needs.

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*Instructor #5:* It changed how much we could deliver. In phase one when I was teaching conflict management we typically use a case study that is three pages long. Well, we can't use that with these students. So you had to find other resources that were less text based. There was always conundrum with students always being quite in response to question because they couldn't read or didn't have a clue about what you are asking. It was really hard in the beginning to get a sense of how much they are grasping because they can't understand what we are saying. We got instructions from (*a local language institute*). When you are teaching, if you use a word that maybe they don't understand then ask the question using a different word. People like (*student*). How much is she getting?

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Faculty found through their experiences with the selection process and work placements that the client pressured the college for changes to important aspects of the program. Many of the changes left students confused and frustrated with faculty. The changes often affected how students responded to their relationships with the faculty. Instructors stated that they believed students used the contract as grounds to complain to the client.

*Instructor #5:* It was a complex and hard to understand situation. We are supposed to be in charge of academic standards, but we found out very early on, actually in the selection process we found out, that the (*client*) will do what it wants to do because some people got into the program, who were not on our list of acceptable candidates. People were getting kicked out for non-academic reasons. Clearly the (*client*) had a lot of clout. There was a student who was not attending and not handing in assignments. Things like this with no ramifications that the other students could see. It discourages others. It was impossible to get anything done about that because we were not the ones to dismiss a student for academic reasons because they (students) have a contract with the (*client*) and the contract said that if a student was kicked out for, probably, academic reasons that they would have to re-pay the (*client*). The (*client*) quickly found out that this was difficult to administer and, therefore, wanted to save face and not put themselves in that position. It was not clearly defined. There were not clearly defined areas of responsibility involved.

So the students knew clearly that the (*client*) was paying us and the students tried to influence us to make it easier for them in terms of assignments and things like

that. But we tried to maintain our integrity and standards. I think the (*client*) was pretty decent in that. The main area of complaint that I would have with the (*client*'s) interference would be in the selection process. That set the tone for the entire program. I think that the (*client*) overstepped what I viewed as our decision in terms of who was selected or not. I think the (*client*) although they probably wouldn't say it, would say that we were, maybe right isn't the word, but that our advice would have given a better outcome. In the early part the differences because of language levels caused a lot of unhappiness and those same differences caused such struggles for some of the students. So if we had maintained our desire to have a consistent language level, things would have been a lot different.

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*Instructor #4:* (*It was*) hard to know what was happening. They had come here with the sense that we are special. They had been chosen to be part of this elite program. Initially under the auspice of the sheikh, so it had a high profile status. Poor students. At some point the (*client*) backed off. Some of them made life changing decisions to be a part of the program and it was going to be high profile. Suddenly, a different name for the program caused students to be disgruntled. They wanted power in a situation that they didn't have any and things were being changed on them. But all the same they came here thinking we're special. Some of them had trouble accepting that they were the lowest on the totem pole and they would fight back and say we can change things because I can phone the (*client*) and say no and you have to do it this way. Someone would call from the (*client*) and say why are you doing that and we would say there is someone on the inside. So the normal structure...if the professor gives you a mark you don't argue with the professor's boss and change it. I think it is aggravated by them thinking we are special so you have to treat us special. I remember when I was at Abu Dhabi, a person at (*the client*) told me that these are people who have nannies and servants, and if they don't like the way they are treated, they go to dad and say, 'I don't like being treated this way.' So there is us and them. They come from privilege. They tell the powers that be to change the servants. Whether they had that role is irrelevant. They may come from that background and status, but it was unclear about the role of the college – their role quickly got eroded. Are we the faculty? Do we have rights to how we teach and structure the program? It got eroded as decisions were revoked or changed. In mid-stream we were told to do things differently.

Instructor #4 had listened to student #10's description of the relationship that he believed students had with the college. The instructor recalled his impression of the student's description:

Early on I said to them, which I believed to be true but I don't know if it was entirely true, look at the power structure. My belief is that (*the client*) has the most power because they pay the bill. They give us the assignment, which we

then use to structure our program. You (*students*) have the least power because you have to follow the program. That is the reality for any university student and I thought that was good argument. But (*a student*) said to me on the side, 'If you had realized that we are ones who are in control here then all of these problems would not have happened. It was students who had the most power because we have connections and we can talk to whoever we want and we'll get it the way we want. If only you understood that then your life would have been so much easier.' I remember being appalled by that. But kind of understanding that was the world them. We were the servants and unless we acted in a certain way and made them look good, we were going to be hurt.

So this whole thing with emails, and (*the client*) screamed down at us, and the contract got stopped with no explanation. Money got withheld with no explanation. Still nothing from (*the client*) about why they had stopped the contract and not paid the money. It is kind of what I experienced with the students. They can just decide that they are not going to pay the money and we are not going to explain it to you at all. Live with it. That is hard. Really confusing.

The educational relationship between the three types of actors was complicated by the contractual arrangement. The economic relationship between the college and the client was challenged by students, which further strained the educational relationships between students and faculty.

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The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate two different types of exchanges, gift exchange and commodity exchange, which are embedded in educational relationships. In this case study, participants discussed their experiences from the perspective of each type of exchange. Through an examination of their comments we are able to observe a contrast that emerges as participants invoke the principles of each type of exchange in different situations.

Through an examination of the gift exchange conducted in educational relationships, it is possible to observe how instructors initiate a process of knowledge transfer with students. Faculty provided students with knowledge about values, skill-building experiences, and their personal reflections. Students had opportunities to reciprocate with faculty. Students reciprocated in their quality of work. They could share their own personal experiences to provide faculty with knowledge about the UAE, which

was useful in preparation of course material. Students also had occasions to offer their feedback on the program, which may have led to improvements for later cohorts.

In contrast to the gift exchange, there is also a commodity exchange that existed between the college and its client. This relationship is based on the college providing its client with a service in exchange for a fee. There is a necessity for faculty to meet the client's requirements for the program objectives. However, in this case study, the commodity exchange had affects on the educational relationships between faculty and students. Participants complained that they had difficulty recognizing the types of roles for which each of the actors should be responsible. Changes made by the client in the selection process directly influenced the educational relationships. In response, students felt that they could challenge the college using the economic relationship between the college and the client as leverage.

In the next chapter I present a discussion of participants' experiences. I assess their experiences based on prominent theories about gift and commodity exchanges. These theories assist in providing context for the events of the program. Participants had to negotiate a number of difficult interactions between the client, the college and the students. The theories and participants experiences discussed in the next chapter will demonstrate how interactions required participants to shift their perspectives between different principles of exchange depending on the situation.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Interpreting Educational Relationships: A Discussion**

The previous chapter displayed the data collected from research participants. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the data presented in chapter three. Here, I employ theories about the two exchange types to further explore the influences that these exchanges have on the educational relationships presented in the case study.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I analyze aspects of a gift-giving exchange that provides a foundation for educational relationships. Education represents a type of reciprocal gift exchange that is unequal, but has a utility for its participants. Educational relationships are based on reciprocal knowledge exchanges that are guided by the principle of “community sharing” (Komter, 2007, p. 98). I also consider possible affects on the gift-giving exchange introduced into the educational relationships by the economic exchange.

The second section is devoted to a discussion of the affects of commodification on the educational relationships. In this case study, it appears that the economic relationship between the client and the college affected the educational relationships of the participants. I will explore whether educational relationships become objectified by the nature of the economic relationships as well as students’ consideration of the credential as an object. This section predominately focuses on the students because I believe that students’ perceptions of their educational relationships are changing due to their ideas about commodification.

The literature on educational relationships explains that students may take either of two positions in regards to their participation in educational programs (Shumar, 1997; Cooper, 2004; Gumport, 2000; Chan, 2004; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; & Martínez-Alemán, 2007). These scholars offer contrasting views as to whether students will discuss their educational relationships from perspectives of participants in either a commodity exchange or a gift exchange. Given the examples provided from this case study, students

in a single program will present descriptions of their educational relationship by employing both positions.

In this case study, the students' perspectives were unsettled as they considered their educational experiences in exchange terms. The best example is provided by the comments from the interview with student #10 who outlined his understanding of the power relationships between the three actors involved with the program. In one instance, he clearly positioned the students as the clients of the college, whose satisfaction should be rated as the foremost in the minds of the faculty. He explains that the students had a role as consumers in their relationship with the college, even though they did not make tuition payments. He acknowledged that an economic relationship existed between the actors, but in his next comment he reflects as to whether the college truly constitutes a business: "I like to think of (*the college*) as an educational institute. It is not a company. It is not a business." Here, this student comments on the non-economic nature of the educational relationships. The comments from student #10 are representative of the dichotomy that existed within students' assessments of their educational experiences.

#### *Education and the Gift-giving Exchange: The Power of the Gift*

There is a strong argument to be made that students in general are more conscious of the affects of the commodity exchange on their educational relationships. Yet, there are aspects to this program that obviously do not meet the standards of a commodity exchange. Commodity exchanges are short-term transactions between mutually disinterested parties (Cooper, 2004, p. 7). In this case study, the program spanned the duration of eighteen months and involved participants in very personal education relationships, which, according to instructor #1, more closely resembled a "family relationship" than the traditional faculty-student relationships. It is clear that all of the criteria of a commodity exchange do not properly apply to educational relationships, which is why it is important to consider whether education is more representative of the cycle of a gift exchange.

Komter (2007) argues that there are two types of gifts that are given in an exchange, anti-utilitarian and utilitarian (p. 94). The anti-utilitarian gift is one in which

the gift is given by freedom of choice. Reciprocity is not as important to this type of exchange. The second type of gift is the utilitarian gift, which is initiated by rational actors who participate in reciprocal gift-giving according to some utility in the exchange. The faculty-student gift exchange between faculty and students represents a utilitarian exchange. Faculty initiates a gift exchange with students. They are paid a wage by the college to do so, but how they choose to participate in the exchange is left to their discretion. There is a utility for the students who gain knowledge and skills from their participation in the exchange. The gift exchange culminates with the acquisition of knowledge, which leads to the attainment of a credential upon graduation.

An educational gift exchange fits a relationship model based on community sharing principles. In this type of gift exchange: “What one gives is not dependent on what one has received, but springs from one’s perception of other people’s needs” (Komter, 2007, p. 98). This statement seems to best describe the type of giving that occurs as a transfer of educational knowledge. All of the instructors spoke about their preparations to develop curriculum to address the needs of the client and the students. However, it is not a requirement of the exchange that the items reciprocated be of the same value. Students are unable to return knowledge as frequently and with the same level of detail that instructors as the experts are able to give. Instead, students offer faculty a reproduction of the knowledge exchanged in the transaction in the form of their participation and assignments. Students attempted to meet the instructors’ need for reciprocation. At times, students may even offer a new insight or experience in their discussion, which helps instructors to build their own repertoire of knowledge. The cycle of gift exchange is based on feelings about sharing in a learning community. In this transaction the spirit of the gift is as important as the gift itself.

The obligations of the gift remain important components of the exchange in educational relationships. Returning to Mauss’ (2000) three obligations, to give, to receive, and to repay, the obligation to give is the responsibility of the faculty as experts and as employees. With respect to the community sharing principles of the gift exchange, faculty prepared their courses with the needs of the students/client in mind. The client provided guidance for setting the objectives of the program. Faculty assessed the client’s

organization and the needs of the students to develop curriculum best suited to meet the program objectives. Decisions as to the direction of the program, such as course topics, are designated to instructors. Then, instructors are able to prepare their own individual courses with attention to how students will be able to obtain knowledge and experience from the curriculum.

The data presented in chapter three demonstrates the degree to which instructors felt obligated to give students certain types of knowledge. Each instructor expressed that it was their intention to give the students new knowledge about a subject topic, particularly in regards to information about different value systems (Instructor #1, #2, #4). Instructors considered types of knowledge and experiences students would need to build their leadership skills. Instructors gave students three items, knowledge, skill building experiences, and their own personal experiences. These three items transferred to students initiating a gift-giving cycle.

The cycle of reciprocity is the foundation of gift-giving exchanges. In the educational context, students have two obligations when given knowledge by faculty. They have the obligation to receive and to repay. In order to receive new knowledge students must be willing to accept it. Martínez-Alemán describes the acceptance of the gift as vital to the educational gift exchange:

“Gifts transmit and are themselves transmitted. Students accept gifts or the teachings and ideas from faculty and in doing so are changed in some way. This is the time of ‘gratitude’; the time when students learn and are only then able to pass the gift along. The gift (ideas and knowledge) moves only when the student has the power to give the gift away, and it is at this moment when we can say that a gift has transformed the recipient or that faculty’s ideas and knowledge have changed the student in some way. ‘Readiness’ marks both the acceptance of the gift and the gratitude felt while preparing for its circulation. Students receive the gift of knowledge and unconsciously ready themselves for the transformation that comes with the gift. But they cannot re-circulate the gift until they have the power (learning) to pass it along” (2007, p. 577).

Throughout the program students demonstrated to faculty their willingness to accept the transformation initiated by new knowledge. It is evident from observations in the classroom that students made determined efforts to receive knowledge from faculty. At times some students would be more interested in the material than others. Overall,

students engaged with the material thoughtfully to express their willingness to learn about different leadership values.

Students expressed their readiness in their assignments. The written assignments and oral presentations required that students reflect on new types of knowledge. These assignments also signified students' acceptance of the gift. Faculty are able to identify whether a student is ready, or not, by the effort and the reflection evident in their assignments. Students who returned assignments with attention to these areas were rewarded with higher grades (Instructor #5). Students who received high marks demonstrated their readiness to re-circulate the gift. The final outcome of the educational gift exchange is that faculty validates students as burgeoning academic authorities (Martínez-Alemán, 2007, p. 586). The gift is symbolized by the credential students receive at graduation.

It is difficult to assess whether students recognize their participation in a gift exchange to the same degree as the faculty. Students acknowledge when instructors have shared new ideas, or spent time worked closely with students to facilitate learning about a difficult topic. In many ways educational relationships are reflective of a friendship of utility rather than consumption (Martínez-Alemán, 2007, p. 584). However, educational relationships, just as friendships, require high levels of trust. Trust is reciprocal. Students trust in the faculty to provide educational experiences that will be useful in situations outside of the classroom. The faculty trusts that students will be respectful of their educational relationships and open themselves to the communication of new knowledge.

Martínez-Alemán argues that trust has been “undermined by the corporatization of the university that sees learning as an enterprise that does not require trust” (2007, p. 585). She is critical of the entrepreneurial approach to educational services. Educational entrepreneurialism is based on signing contracts to generate revenue for the institution. While the entrepreneurial activities have become common among educational institutions, the contractual relationship can interfere with the development of educational relationships in the classroom. Contracts regulate the exchange of goods between parties. Contracts do not contribute to building social bonds (Martínez-Alemán, 2007, p. 585).

Without a social bond, there is no need for trust in an educational relationship. This situation creates significant issues for gift-giving because reciprocation relies on an effective social bond that is based on trust.

Without the social bond in gift-giving exchanges the obligations of the gift are minimized. When participants fail to meet the standards for their obligations, then there is the potential for the loss of dignity if a gift is not accepted or returned properly (Mauss, 2000, p. 41-42). The failure to meet an obligation creates obstacles for building trust in the educational relationship. This is a problem given the ambiguities created by the entrepreneurial approach to education. Martínez-Alemán explains that students are more likely to make judgments about the credibility of their instructors. Students perceive a connection between the learning objectives for their courses and the abilities of their instructors. They base these judgments on their own norms about reciprocity and fairness (Martínez-Alemán, 2007, p, 585).

In this case study there were occasions in which students questioned the nature of their educational relationships. These occasions were highlighted when the element of trust between students and faculty was believed to be broken by the participants (Student #3, #10, #12). Students challenged instructors using their own conceptions of fairness to criticize the grading scale. It is evident that from these examples that students do not always feel obliged to receive and may only feel obliged to reciprocate enough to secure the grades that motivate their own self-interests. In this case study, student #12 admits that her feelings about the grading scale directly affected her trust in the integrity of the program. She explained during her interview that she was willing to let her work decline as a result. In this example, the student attempted to remove herself from the obligations of the gift exchange. She claimed to accept only what knowledge she felt was necessary to obtain the credential at the end of the program, but she did not commit to the obligation to reciprocate with faculty.

Without trust in the educational relationship, the nature of that relationship becomes ambiguous. When students question whether trust is broken, it is then that they re-evaluate the nature of their educational relationships. Without a sense of trust, they

determined that their educational relationships were based primarily on a commodity exchange. In this case study, the contractual relationship affected the social bond between faculty and some students. Faculty frequently commented that the relationship between the college and the client interfered with their educational relationships (Instructors #2, 3, & 4). The client had the power to make decisions about the direction of the program. The decisions that had the most significant affect on the educational relationships were the non-pedagogical decisions. Decisions that impacted the operation of selection process and the work placements interfered with the educational relationships, particularly for those students who challenged faculty about their grades.

The client's decision to alter the roster of recommended students created obstacles for the development of reciprocal educational relationships. Instructors explained that the client's decisions limited what they could offer to students in terms of classroom learning and outside the classroom experiences. Unfortunately, there is nothing that the instructors could do about these types of situations. In fact for most instructors, this issue was not relevant to how they approached their duties as instructors, but it did affect the depth of knowledge and the types of experiences faculty could share with the students.

Problems arise for faculty when students challenge the quality and the integrity of the program. This situation creates a struggle for faculty who have to manage the contractual needs of the client and at the same time participate in the cycle of gift exchange with students. The examples in this program demonstrate that there are times when these needs are in conflict. The client chose students that it felt suited the needs of its organization rather than adhering to the recommendations of faculty from the college. In the end, the college has to respect the decisions of the client despite the negative outcomes that its decisions had for the educational relationships. Though educational considerations are usually stated by faculty to be their highest priorities, appearance and satisfaction does matter to students/clients. These are difficult criteria to measure, especially in instances where satisfaction may be different for the client than for the students. In this example, it appears to be more appropriate that the college satisfy the needs of the client, but this situation clearly frustrates both the faculty and students.

*Education and the Commodity Exchange: The Power of the Object*

In a capitalistic society commodities are things. Things have a power to mystify the human relationships contained within. Lukacs (1971) explains that the essence of the commodity structure “is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a ‘phantom objectivity,’ an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people” (p. 83). Human relationships are objectified by the process of commodity exchange. By exchanging objects, as we do in a commodity exchange, the subject and social relations become object-like, thing-like, abstract and commodity-like (Baldwin, 2009, p. 381). The outcome of objectification is that quantification is reified and reifying the essential character of relational forms.

The reification of relationships extends beyond the economic relations involved in a commodity exchange and into the non-economic relations that exist in other areas of social life. The activities of economic relationships have an influence outside of the economic realm with effects for all types of social living (Baldwin, 2009, p. 381). As a result, all of the relations attached to the subjects involved in a commodity exchange are susceptible to objectification. Objectification has the affect of reifying relationships as an abstraction of things. As a result, economic terms infuse the creation of the non-economic subject.

The intrusion of commodity exchange in to non-economic aspects of social life affects social relations. Adorno laments that humans in capitalistic societies are forgetting to give gifts as a result of the intrusion of the economic into social life (1974, p. 42-43). He speaks particularly about the kinds of gift-giving that are reducible to alienable charitable donations or those personal gift exchanges that are reserved for designated special occasions. However, Adorno’s position is applicable to all types of gift-giving relationships. Humans require gifts not only to form social bonds, but also to maintain subjective feelings about their relationships with others. Adorno’s concerns have important implications for educational relationships because these types of relationships function based on the principles of a gift-giving exchange. If the principles of gift

exchanges are forgotten in a capitalist society, then what are the possible effects that commodification may have on educational relationships?

The characteristics of commodification are useful in a consideration of students' descriptions of the program in this case study. The earliest indication that commodification is evident in educational relationships enters from students' perception of the use-value for their academic credentials. The credential is an object that students desired to obtain because it has power. In the interviews, all of the students expressed a belief that the academic credential has an intrinsic power to do something for them and to do something transformational to them. The belief in the intrinsic power of the credential makes it a highly prized object.

First, the credential has the power to do something for students. At the very least, the credential offered students the possibility for an employment opportunity within the client's organization. This opportunity could be very valuable to the advancement of their careers. The program promoted to students that they would be expected by the client to apply their new knowledge in leadership positions. As such, the credential had the power to introduce students to a valuable opportunity with a potential to result in the acquisition of a high status job.

Another power embedded within the credential was the power to do something transformational to the students. The students entered into the program with a belief that the experiences acquiring this credential would be transformational in two ways. First, the credential possessed a power to transform students (Student #9). In this case, the person that students would become was a leadership figure. Students arrived in the program with their own personal leadership potential accumulated from an array of life experiences. A credential from the program would signify to others that students' successfully refined their leadership potential during their time in the program. The credential signified that students commanded new knowledge and new experiences. The process of acquiring knowledge and experience molded their potential into leadership qualities. The credential signified that the transformation from students into leaders had reached completion.

An additional way in which students considered their credential to be transformative was through their participation in an international education program. Students commented in their interviews that participation in an international education program is a source for personal growth (Student #2). Students entered the program with the thought that their experiences would change who they were or who others perceived them to be. The best example of this sentiment is highlighted by the comments from student #2, who compares his international educational experience with those students who received their education from Emirati institutions. This student explained that international experiences change a person who leaves their home country. An international student is recognized as a successful traveler who has developed independence, communication, and relationship skills. The credential from an international education program is a transformational symbol of achievement.

The appearance of a commodity is a central concern for its consumers. In this case, students assessed the credential for the power they believed it to possess and their perception of its appearance to other people. In a commodity exchange system, commodities are signs that circulate based on their appearance and not their substance (Shumar, 1997, p. 23). This aspect of the commodity is perhaps unsettling in regards to educational credentials. Students had difficulties reconciling the learning opportunity from an educational perspective with the possible employment opportunities introduced by the credential. They entered into the program based on their desire to obtain an academic credential that offers employment and their expectations for educational and international experiences. By the end of the program students seemed uncertain as to whether they would be assessed by the client based on the credential they acquired as a cohort or the substance displayed by the quality of their individual educational work (Student #10).

At the outset of the program, students became aware of the language variance that emerged amongst the cohort due to results from the selection process. The language issue created challenges for everyone involved with the program, students and instructors alike. For students with low English competency the course work was difficult while other students complained, in their interviews, that the material was not challenging enough.

This issue was complicated by the grading assessments. The students knew that the faculty was responsible for students' performance assessments, which the college shared with the client. The grades became a dilemma for some students. Students were critical because they found the distribution to be too narrow. If a student received a grade that was close to those students who were having difficulties with their assignments, then that student grew concerned that their standing with the client would be de-valued as a result of what the student perceived to be the result of a narrow grade distribution. This situation caused students to inform instructors that students "knew where they sit" in relation to other members of the cohort (instructor #5).

Students voiced a concern that their credential had a value, but that value may be determined by other people's assessments of its quality (Student #3, #10). Their concerns created speculation as to how students might be received by the client when they were selected for their job placements within its organization. Students grew concerned that if the client perceived there to be issues with students in the program, then their credential may not be valued as they would expect it to be (Student #10). In reality, there was no way that any possible return on students' investment in the program could be assured until after their graduation and they had spent time working for the client. This situation left students with very little power and a great deal of consternation over their decision to participate in the program.

In response to their situation students formulated a calculation to evaluate their experiences. They attempted to determine the use-value for their educational experiences based on a number of subjective criteria. Students utilized a self-assessment of whether or not anything was learned during their participation in the program. They estimated as to which parts of their learning experiences would be useful after graduation. They assessed whether other people were likely to perceive their educational credentials favourably or unfavourably. They also evaluated what criteria they felt may have inhibited their learning, such as program content, the faculty, the facilities, other cohort members, or their own efforts in the program. The outcome of this calculation is students' individual qualitative assessment of their experiences.

The outcome of students' use-value calculation is compared with their evaluation of the exchange value. In this case study, students seemed unlikely candidates to ask the question, 'Am I getting what I paid for?' Their participation in a commodity exchange relationship would seem to be limited in comparison to the college or the client. Students did not have to pay for their tuition, accommodations, or living expenses while in the program. Instead, students would only incur a financial penalty for a decision to withdrawal or if a student was removed from the program. Either situation would require that a student reimburse the client for its expenses. Despite the fact students had only a limited monetary commitment they still performed an exchange-value calculation. Rather, than calculate the return based on financial costs, students assessed the exchange based on the length of time they invested in the program. Shumar explains that it is acceptable to use time as a category of investment because time is an object: "In capitalism, because we sell our labour according to a rationalized production system we sell labour time, and specifically agreed-upon segments of our lives" (1997, p. 27-28). Students considered the time enrolled in the program as an investment in building their education credentials. They felt that their time in the program was a period where they were not able to work a regular waged job, which may have meant lost opportunities to accumulate wealth and status (Student #3).

To question whether the credential was worth their investment students collapsed the two value types into an exchange-value assessment. In this way, students made attempts to quantify their experiences. The outcomes of their assessments had important impacts on the educational relationships between students and faculty. In their discussions about their educational relationships, students talked about the credential independently from the classroom work conducted by faculty. They assessed their satisfaction with the credential based on the return expected along with the quality of their educational relationships in the program.

This type of calculation had different outcomes for different students. There were students who felt that their educational needs were satisfied by their educational relationships, for example, student #2 or #9. These students did not offer complaints about the program, or question the value of their credential. These students expressed that

their educational relationships facilitated effective learning; therefore, the program offered a high level of use-value. They felt that the knowledge they had received was valuable because they were encouraged to build their skills and learn to understand unfamiliar situations using new knowledge. Therefore, the credential was valuable because it filled a need in an area that the student felt should be addressed to further their career.

In contrast, students who did not recognize the use-value of the credential claimed to experience a higher degree of commodification in their educational relationships. Four students, #3, #7, #10, and #12, used the economic relationship to challenge their non-economic educational relationships. This group of students argued that commodification had spread into their educational relationship because their learning needs were not being met. These students found that the exchange-value overshadowed the use-value, which caused them to question the quality of their credential. To protect the value of the credential, students interfered in the economic relationship between the client and the college in an attempt to exert influence over the educational processes. In these situations the educational relationships between faculty and students became mediated by an object, the credential.

A discussion of students' interpretation of their educational relationship demonstrates ways in which commodification spreads from an economic relationship between the client and the college into the non-economical educational relationships in the classroom. Whether their perception is accurate or not, some students viewed themselves as participants in a commodity exchange in which they invested their time into the program in exchange for an academic credential. In these examples, we see students objectify their educational relationships. Students made attempts to rationally quantify their educational experiences to calculate the value of their credential. They minimized the importance of the educational relationships that contributed to the construction of value in the credential. In this situation, social relations are mystified by students' assessments of the value possessed by an object, the credential.

## *Conclusion*

The case study presented in this thesis offers an opportunity to explore the educational relationships based on the criteria of a commodity exchange and a gift exchange. From a discussion of the data presented in chapter three, it is possible to view the ways in which the economic relationship permeates the non-economic educational relationships. This phenomenon adds further complexity to the nature of educational relationships.

It becomes clear from a discussion of the data that educational relationships function based on the principles of a reciprocal gift-exchange. In this case, gift-giving represented an exchange based on utility and the principle of community sharing (Komter, 2007, p. 94, 98). Participants expect that the three types of obligations that accompany the gift should be adhered to in this transaction. Along with the obligations of the gift, trust is an important element to both the gift-giving exchange and growth of educational relationships.

Faculty seem to be the most focused on gift-giving in their relationships with students. They worked to meet a need and set the standards for acceptance and reciprocation of the gift. The exchange cycle continues until students demonstrate their readiness and instructors are able to validate the new knowledge acquired by the students with a credential. In their work in the classroom, faculty are better able to separate the economic relationship from the non-economic relationships to focus on a gift-giving exchange with students. The economic relationship structures the program, but faculty have choices about how they will give to students. This situation allows instructors to consider the type of knowledge and experiences that they will give to students and how to access the reciprocal exchange.

In the classroom, students appear to be much more aware of the affects of commodification on their educational relationships. This trend is the result of the way in which students view the academic credential as an object. Students reify the credential as a thing, which objectifies their educational relationships. They seem to be forgetting the gift that is the foundation of educational relationships. Instead, they search for the value

of the credential as an object. They attempt to quantify their educational experiences by determining the exchange-value for their credential. This trend is the result of the economic relationship of commodity diffusing into non-economic educational relationships.

Education in the classroom does not meet all of the criteria to be properly called a commodity exchange. However, students are particularly disposed toward viewing their experiences through the lens of their interpretations of a commodity exchange when their educational relationships become ambiguous. Ambiguity is created as the result of participants questioning of the element of trust in their education relationships. When students express their belief that trust in their relationships is not being respected, they also question the value of their credential. If students are not satisfied with the outcome of their exchange-value calculation then they are more likely to feel that their educational experiences have been commoditized. Not all students will feel in this same way. There were students in the program who did not question the level of trust that existed between faculty and students. These students commented positively on their educational experiences and the quality of their educational relationships.

In the next chapter, I offer some concluding remarks based on the discussion of this case study. The chapter addresses the prospects for the future of international education given the examples contained in this case study.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research project was to explore the nature of educational relationships that involve faculty and students in an international education program. The data was collected using a mixed-method approach, which contributed to the qualitative ethnographic description that is contained within this thesis. To further explore the data I employed theories about two types of exchange to provide an ethnographic description of how participants responded to their educational relationships. Primarily, I relied upon theories about gift and commodity exchanges, and supplementary theories related to globalization, cultural boundaries and human capital. These theories have proven to be a constructive means to engage with the current literature about international education.

A segment of the scholarly literature about international education centers on a debate about the affects of entrepreneurialism and the commodification of higher education. Some scholars have argued that educational institutions' activities in the international market have created commodified learning experiences for students (Shumar, 1997; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). The main criticism is that educational institutions are packaging and selling knowledge to students in order to take advantage of the demand for international programs. However, despite this criticism, there is only minimal data already collected about how the trend towards entrepreneurialism in the international market actually affects educational relationships in classrooms.

By examining data collected from participants' who partake in an international education program, I have found that, despite the criticisms of commodification, educational relationships are best described as being guided by the principles of a gift exchange rather than those of a commodity exchange. From the statements offered by participants and observations of their behaviour in the classroom, it would appear that the principles of a gift exchange, such as reciprocity, community sharing, and trust, provide for a social bond to form within educational relationships between faculty and students. In addition to these principles, the obligations of the gift exchange, as described by Mauss (2000), are active components for successful educational relationships. The gift-

giving bond was very strong in instances where the educational relationships were the most effective. Instructors delivered their courses attentively and students actively engaged with the material. The arrangement resulted in a cycle of reciprocal knowledge exchange. The examples from this case study seem to be more in alignment with scholars who reject commodity theory as it is applied to educational settings (Cooper, 2004; Martínez-Alemán, 2007). For example, scholars such as Martínez-Alemán who states that in educational relationships knowledge as the gift circulates as a consequence of a unique social bond rather than a contractual arrangement (2007, p. 575).

In an assessment of whether theories about commodity exchange are useful in descriptions of educational relationships, it is evident that the model does not provide quite as accurate a depiction of faculty-student interactions. In this case study, the educational relationships were sustained for a period of eighteen months. The cycle of exchange occurred over a lengthy period of time during which faculty were invested in the success of the students and students needed to learn from faculty. It is difficult to make an argument that these educational relationships should be described as constructed by participants to be alienable short term transaction between disinterested parties. Rather, the opposite seems to be a more truthful statement about the education relationships displayed in this case study.

However, the data presented here does portray some contrasting examples of how students perceive the nature of their educational relationships. There are aspects of students' descriptions of their educational experiences where commodity theory is applicable. While an examination of commodity theory displays that educational relationships are better described to act as a gift exchange, students take a much more flexible position with regards to their descriptions of their experiences. In this way, it is possible to observe aspects of commodification that directly affect the operation of educational relationships.

The data demonstrates that while educational relationships operated via the principles of a gift exchange, there were many instances in which students in the program approached their education as a commodified experience. With the rise in the importance

of academic credentialism, students are being taught to carefully prepare for the direction of their education and how their decisions are likely to affect their prospective career opportunities (Spring, 1998, p. 104). Students are encouraged to invest not only their money, but also significant periods of time, in the acquisition of knowledge that is validated with the achievement of a credential. Academic credentialism influences students to objectify their educational experiences. As is evident by the comments in this case study, students attribute a transformative power to the credential. With this in mind, they have come to expect that their credentials will be valued by others and they will be rewarded with employment opportunities. In this way, students do not view their educational relationships as based on the principles of a gift exchange, but rather those of a commodity exchange.

When students view the credential as an object, the social relationships that are invested in providing the credential with its value are objectified. Educational relationships become mediated by students' assessments about the exchange value of the credential. Objectification is the dilemma caused by the commodification process because commodity exchanges cannot be limited to an economic relationship. Instead, this process spreads into other non-economic areas of social life. As Lukacs states:

“The transformation of the commodity relation into a thing of ‘ghostly objectivity’ cannot therefore content itself with the reduction of all objects for the gratification of human needs to commodities. It stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man [*sic*]; his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things which he can ‘own’ or ‘dispose of’ like the various objects of the external world. And there is no natural form in which human relations can be cast, ... without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process” (1974, p. 100).

Students gain the impression from the existence of an economic relationship that knowledge can be possessed simply by paying for admission into an educational program. In this way, students objectify their relationship with faculty transitioning it into one that is a service provider-client relationship based on the payment of tuitions and the provision of educational services. Objectification reifies the nature of the educational relationship, which creates a number of questions about the responsibilities of faculty and students. What types of responsibilities do students have towards their work inside and

outside of the classroom? How are students to be satisfied with their credentials? How responsible are faculty for the learning of every student if students consider themselves to be customers?

The appearance of commodification to students is especially a problem for educational relationships when elements of the gift exchange suffer from a lapse by the participants. Students have difficulties making a separation between the economic from the non-economic aspects of their educational relationships. They are very aware about the types of investments they are making in their education and that the benefits of their investments are not only theirs' to own. They acknowledge that educational institutions also benefit from tuition revenues and program fees. In this case study, there were moments in which students questioned the nature of their educational relationships due to a declining sense of trust in their relationships with faculty. Students conflated the educational relationship with faculty and the economic relationship with the institution though faculty were indirect beneficiaries of the economic exchange. This situation allows students to focus their attention on the perception of a commoditized learning experience. While their descriptions of what a commodity exchange actually is may not fit with all of the criteria to satisfy the theoretical model, students believe that commodification still appears to be accurate to their experiences.

Examples from this case study display that this situation can create obstacles to building relationships with students. Faculty must manage the interests of a number of different actors. At times, the interests of the client may not be a match for those of the students, the college or the faculty. Faculty must choose how to incorporate the interests of all parties into the design of the program. However, the client does have significant input into decisions that affect educational relationships. Its decisions can affect the level of trust that needs to exist within relationships between faculty and students. In order to negotiate any of the difficulties that may arise out from decision making outside of the classroom, the responsibilities of the different actors need to be clearly stated at the outset of the program. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the participants should provide students with an appropriate understanding to guide their expectations. This may not minimize students' perception of commoditization, but it may inform students about

the economic relationship outside the classroom and the non-economic educational relationship within.

I have argued in this thesis that educational relationships are guided by the principles of a gift exchange rather than those of a commodity exchange. However, at the same time, I have found that the experiences of commodification appear to be very real for students in this project. It is my intention to demonstrate with this thesis how areas of social life are affected by the current trend toward the “commodification of everything” that is affecting education in North America (Gilbert, 2005). It is important to search out aspects of social life that operate guided by principles that are alternative to those of the commodity exchange. To stem the tide of commodification, I feel that it is important to find reminders that there are some types of social relationships that still operate based on the reciprocal principles of a gift exchange.

#### *Possibilities for Future Research*

The research contained in this thesis was designed to engage with participants at a specific research site to explore their experiences with international education. There were a number of constraints to designing the project in this way. The number of research participants was limited to those students and faculty involved with the program. The conclusions reached in this thesis are representative of this group’s experiences. In another application of this project, a larger sample group would provide a means to compare and contrast the results.

Also, the selection of an alternate research site may yield different results. For instance, the field site could be changed to apply these theories to account for other types of educational situations. For example, online learning and distance education are other areas of the education sector that have increased in demand over recent years, especially internationally (Larreamendy-Joerns & Lienhardt, 2006). These delivery modes of educational services use technology to mediate the relationships between faculty and students. It is possible that a survey of the educational relationships involved with these types of delivery modes may also lead to different conclusions about whether their experiences constitute a gift or a commodity exchange.

Finally, one of the main contributions of this project is an examination of a gift-giving exchange that occurs within a modern institution. Gift theorists argue that gift-giving is the language of the moral economy for modern society, which guides “the non-contractual presuppositions on which contracts are based, the non-institutional framework of every institution” (Berking, 1999, p. 4). Yet, social theorist Theodor Adorno (1974) cautions that the gift exchange is losing its importance within capitalist society. He offers this comment about the status of gift-giving:

*“No exchanges allowed. – Human beings are forgetting how to give gifts. Violations of the exchange-principle have something mad and unbelievable about them; here and there even children size up the gift-giver mistrustfully, as if the gift were only a trick, to sell them a brush or soap... Likewise with the right to exchange the gift, which signifies to the receiver: here’s your stuff, do what you want with it, if you don’t like it, I don’t care, get something else if you want”* (p.42).

In the statements above it appears that while some theorists believe that the gift exchange is a fundamental part of social relationships, others foresee its decline. One way to further explore the importance of the gift exchange to social relations in capitalist societies would be to examine other types of institutions, not only educational, to assess gift-giving practices.

To do so would require an examination of gift-giving exchanges to observe whether the gift is being affected by aspects of commodification. In this way, it is possible to observe the penetration of economic relationships into those that have been considered to be of a non-economic nature. An application of this may be well-suited for an exploration of health care services, particularly given the current debates about universality and privatization that appear in many countries. Or perhaps instances in which economic relationships are being removed from social relationships through a process of de-commodification. For example, an assessment of gift-giving could be made through an examination of the availability of information that circulates via the internet to explore possible areas of de-commodification. While these areas still need to be thoroughly investigated ethnographically by anthropologists, research and analysis using the models as presented in this thesis would provide insights into the effects of commodification on gift-giving relationships.

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## **Appendix 1 Observation Guide**

Listed below are the items were set to be documented during the observation period.

- What types of activities do instructors ask students to participate in during classroom instruction?
- How and when do students verbally and non-verbally communicate with their instructors?  
How and when do instructors verbally and non-verbally communicate with students?  
How and when do students verbally and non-verbally communicate with each other?
- How are the classrooms arranged and decorated? What items are posted on the walls of the classroom?
- How are students organized in the classroom? Are students arranged to work individually or in groups? If students are arranged in groups, what is the composition of those groups? Do students choose the arrangement or are they assigned by instructors? Does the arrangement of the change? Daily? Weekly? Monthly?
- What formats are used by instructors to structure coursework in the classroom? Lecture? Seminar? Individual assignments? Group work?
- What is the duration of time that students work individually? What is the duration of time that students work in groups?
- How much time do students spend with instructors in the classroom? How much time do students spend working with instructors individually? How much time do students spend working with instructors in groups?
- How do students organize themselves for group work?
- What types of items do instructors use as teaching aids in the classroom? How and when are teaching aids used by instructors?
- What forms of media do instructors use in the classroom?

- How do students respond to the material presented by instructors in the classroom?
- How do students respond to the assignments given by instructors in the classroom?

## Appendix 2

### Interview Guides

#### *Student Interview Guide*

##### Section 1 – Background

- Is this the first time that you have travelled outside of the UAE to further your education?
  - If not, how does this experience compare with your previous educational experiences?
- What influence your decision to choose an international education program?
  - What are the economic, political, and/or social influences to your decision to choose an international education program?
- What influenced your decision to choose an education program in Canada?
  - What are the economic, political, and/or social influences to your decision to choose an education program in Canada?
- What influenced your decision to choose this particular program?
  - What are the economic, political, and/or social influences to your decision to choose this program?

##### Section 2 – Experiences as an International Student

- How would you describe your experience as an international student?
- How has your cultural background influenced your experiences?
- How has gender influenced your experiences?
- How has age influenced your experiences?
- How has language influenced your experiences?
- What benefits do you receive from learning in another country?
- What disadvantages do you receive from learning in another country?
- Would you participate in another international education program?

### Section 3 – Experiences in the Program

- What are the most challenging aspects to learning that you experience in the program?
  - How did you deal with those challenges?
  - What could be done to ease those challenges?
- Do you feel that there are cultural aspects to learning in this program?
  - If so, please describe those aspects.
- Have you encountered any obstacles to learning in the program?
  - If so, how could this program be improved to assist the learning experiences of students?
- In what ways have the program changed over time?
- Do you feel that you could have received the same type of educational training in the UAE? Please explain.

### Section 4 - Relationships

- How would you describe the relationships that students have with each other in the classroom?
  - Have these relationships changed over time? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- How would you describe the relationship that students have with instructors in the classroom?
  - Have these relationships changed over time? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- How would you describe your relationship with other students?
  - Have these relationships changed over time? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- How would you describe your relationship with instructors?
  - Have these relationships changed over time? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- Do you feel that instructors were prepared for culturally sensitive issues (e.g. gender, religion)? Please explain.
- What positive experiences have you had learning with other students in the class?
- What negative experiences have you had learning with other students in the class?
- What positive experiences have you had learning with instructors?
- What negative experiences have you had learning with instructors?

## Section 5 – Conclusion

- What are the most positive aspects of your experiences?
- What were the most challenging aspects of your experiences?
- What surprised you the most about this experience?

## *Faculty Interview Guide*

### Section 1 – Origins of the Program

- What are the origins of the program?
- What are the themes of the program?
- What are the learning objectives of the program?
- How were the learning objectives decided?
- How much consideration in the design of the course is given to existing Emirati attitudes and values towards leadership?
- How much input do the instructors have into the courses?
- How much input into the courses did you have?
- How much input did the students have into courses and contents?
- How did you use student feedback evaluations?
- What kind of affect did their comments have on the development of the course and its content?
- How has the program developed through its different phases?
- What are the significant changes that occurred over the different phases of the program?
- How would describe the relationship between CCE, MOPA and the students?

### Section 2 – Selection Process

- Please describe the selection process.
- What were the challenges of the selection process?
- Why do you think that these challenges occur?
- How did these challenges affect your experience as an instructor?

- How did these challenges affect the group of students selected for the program? Inside or outside of the classroom?

### Selection 3 – Leadership

- What attitudes and values related to leadership did you include in your courses?
- What attitudes and values related to leadership did you recognize from students?
- How did students exercise their leadership skills, either inside or outside of the classroom?
- Teaching attitudes and values is a central aspect of the program. What attitudes and values do you feel that students accepted? Why?
- Were there any attitudes and values that students resisted?
- Why do you think acceptance or resistance occurred?
- What are the most significant educational challenges encountered by students in the program?
- Did any of the students seek any extra help with course content or language skills?
- What types of extra help did students ask for?
- What types of extra help was offered to students?
- Were students who sought out extra help treated differently by other students? If yes, please describe.

### Section 4 – Relationships

- How would you describe the relationships between the students?
- Did you notice any changes in these relationships over the different phases of the program?
- Which students would you describe as exercising leadership qualities? Why?
- How did gender affect the relationships among the students?
- How did gender influence the ways in which students completed their course work?

- How did language affect the relationship among students in the classroom?
- How did language affect the ways in which you taught course content?
- How did language affect the ways in which students completed their coursework?
- How did age affect the relationships among the students?
- How did age affect the ways in which students completed their coursework?
- How did religion influence the ways in which course material was taught?
- Were there any changes to the program introduced in consideration of religious values?
- How would describe your relationship with the students?
- Did your relationship with the students change over the different phases of the program?
- How would you describe the relationship between instructors and students?
- Did these relationships change over time?
- Why was anonymous marking introduced?
- How did students respond?
- How did you feel about this change?

#### Section 5 – Conclusion

- What are the most positive aspects of your experiences in the program?
- What were the most challenging aspects of your experience?
- What surprised you the most about this experience?
- What did you learn from the students about leadership?